DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 426 950 SO 029 874

TITLE	The Role of Parents in the Education Systems of the European Union.
INSTITUTION	EURYDICE European Unit, Brussels (Belgium).
ISBN	ISBN-2-87116-260-3
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	146p.
AVAILABLE FROM	EURYDICE European Unit, Rue d' Arlon 15, B-1050 Brussels, Belgium; Tel: 32-2-238-30-11; e-mail: EURYDICE.UEE@euronet.be
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Childhood Needs; *Compulsory Education; Educational Research; Foreign Countries; Parent Attitudes; *Parent Participation; *Parent Role; Parent Student Relationship; Social Science Research
IDENTIFIERS	*European Union; Social Participation

ABSTRACT

To reflect on factors influencing the quality of schooling, this study examined parents' social participation in education in various countries of the European Union. The premise was that, in practice, parent participation in education systems makes possible both consistency of education and the cultural enrichment that children need. The study first provides a comparative overview that contributes to understanding of both the diversity of the national situations and the convergences that are found in Europe on this subject. It also provides extensive details on the initiatives and measures taken to involve parents in compulsory education matters both at the national level and at the level of the individual school; the patterns of representation and the powers that are given to parents in the various participatory bodies are presented country by country, encompassing 18 countries in all. (Contains extensive tables, maps, and charts.) (BT)

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The Information Network on Education in Europe

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THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION *

*This study also covers the EFTA/EEA countries.

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This document is published by the European Unit of Eurydice with financial support from the European Commission (DG XXII: Education, Training and Youth).

Original language: French
Available in DE, EN, ES, FR
D/1997/4008/7
ISBN 2-87116-260-3

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PREFACE

The major advance represented by compulsory education for all at the beginning of the century profoundly altered the relationship between the family and society as regards the upbringing of children. With this measure, parents who had hitherto been the only ones concerned and involved in the future of their children had to share this responsibility with the school.

The educational challenge which family/school cooperation presents is recognised by everyone and has been mentioned on many occasions. In practice, parent participation in education systems makes possible both consistency of education and the cultural enrichment which children need. This need for synergy is even more important where there are wide differences between the world of public education and the family.

In 1995, the theme of social participation in education was chosen by the Spanish Presidency as a central element in Community reflection on factors influencing the quality of schooling. The conclusions on this topic, adopted by the Council of Education Ministers on 23 October 1995, stress the importance, in the European Union, of exchanges of information on the process of social participation in the education systems.

For this reason, therefore, the European Commission encouraged EURYDICE to undertake this study of the patterns of parent participation in the education systems of the European Union and the EFTA/EEA countries.[1] This study complements the document which was published recently by our network on Consultative Councils and Other Forms of Social Participation in Education in the European Union.

This publication provides a wealth of detail on the initiatives and measures taken to involve parents in compulsory education matters both at national level and at the level of the individual school. The patterns of representation and the powers which are given to parents in the various participatory bodies are presented country by country. A comparative overview by way of introduction contributes to understanding of both the diversity of the national situations and the convergences which are found in Europe on this subject.

This study was prepared by the European Unit of the network in the first instance in the form of a working paper for the seminar which the Spanish Presidency held in Segovia on the subject of social participation. In view of the interest in the work, it was decided to publish it. The National Units in the network then made an essential contribution so as to ensure that the national information was as reliable and complete as possible. We should like to express our thanks to them for this invaluable help.

With this study, the EURYDICE network would also like to make its contribution to the debate on this important topic which concerns all of those involved in the educational community in Europe.

Luce Pépin
Head of the European Unit of EURYDICE
June 1997

[1] Under the Agreement on the European Economic Area, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are participating in the activities of the EURYDICE network.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Individual and collective rights of parents

1.1. Individual rights

In all Member States of the European Union and the EFTA/EEA countries, parents individually have either a **natural right** or even in some cases a **statutory obligation** to educate their children.

In all these countries, parents also have **freedom of choice** of the kind of school they desire for their child, whether public or private. Private education may be free or fee-paying. But, in the majority of countries, when parents place their child in the public sector, their choice of school is restricted by their place of residence, although exceptions are generally possible when requested by families. In only a few countries are parents free to enrol their child in the publicly funded school of their choice. This is the case in Belgium, where this freedom is a basic principle. In Sweden and the United Kingdom, it is also an accepted principle, subject however to the school's having sufficient places for the child to be admitted.

Parents' choice of a publicly funded school can be restricted both by the demarcation of the catchment areas within which they can enrol their children and by various admission or selection criteria which are applied when a school does not have sufficient places to meet demand. This is the case in Spain, in particular, where statutory criteria of selection – such as family income or the presence of siblings in the school – have been laid down for situations in which demand exceeds supply. In Ireland and Italy, the receiving school itself takes the admission decisions. However, parents in most countries have a right of appeal when schools refuse to admit their children.

Other restrictions on freedom of parental choice appear, in particular at secondary education level, in countries where entry to a particular type of secondary school depends on an assessment of the pupil's performance at the end of the primary stage. This is the case in Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Northern Ireland (United Kingdom) and Liechtenstein.

In Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Spain, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Austria, parents have a **right of appeal** on various aspects, in particular those related to the assessment of their children and their admission to particular types of school.

Finally, parents also have a **right to information** on the progress of their children or on their own rights. The United Kingdom accords great importance to this right. The law stipulates that schools must provide or make available to parents information on the internal organisation (admission procedures, curriculum, inspection) and on the management and funding of their children's schools. In Austria, a new system of early warning *(Frühwarnsystem)* has been introduced recently so that parents are informed in good time about any learning problems their children may have. Parents also have to be informed about the measures which it is possible to take in order to prevent children failing at school.

1.2. Collective rights

All countries have explicit public policies in favour of the involvement of parents collectively. However, the types and levels of parent representation on management or consultative bodies vary from one country to another. This comparative summary is devoted to a detailed analysis of the different patterns of organisation of parent participation.

Generally speaking, representatives of parents have the right at least to be involved in choices of a general educational character (for instance, curricula and teaching methods, timetables, educational pilot schemes etc.).

Finally, in all countries, parents are also organised in associations, which allows them a voice in various aspects of school affairs.

2. Parent participation: a recent development

Without going into the history of parent participation in the education systems of the various Member States of the European Union and the EFTA/EEA countries, it is interesting to note that, in the majority of countries, it is mainly **since 1970** that parents or their representatives have participated in formal structures in the education systems. In some countries, however, this process began earlier (Germany, France, Luxembourg, Austria, Finland and Norway).

The **1980s** saw considerable activity with the establishment of a body of legislation in most countries, except Belgium (French Community), Denmark, Italy, Sweden, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Parent participation did not develop in a linear manner in every country. Thus there could be about 20 years between the first and subsequent legislation (France, Luxembourg, Finland and Norway).

The legislation and educational reforms of the **1990s** gave a new statutory basis to parent participation in the education systems in most countries. School autonomy and the participation of parents in the management of schools are together at the centre of current debates and new legislation. In 1995, Spain passed a law (LOPEG) which reinforced parental involvement in the running of individual schools. In the same year, Ireland (White Paper on Education) and Iceland (Law on the *grunnskóli)* confirmed the representation of parents at school level. In 1996, Sweden implemented regulations defining the rights of the municipalities to establish local councils on which parents are in the majority. Finally, Austria and Scotland also introduced provisions in relation to the role of parents in 1996.

Table 1: Dates of legislation and significant events in parent participation

Country / Dates	Before 1970	1970-79	1980-89	After 1990
B (fr)		1970		1990
(nl)		1970	1988	1991, 1993
(de)		1970	1984	
DK		1970		1990, 1993
D	various laws between 1918 and 1945	1970s	1980s	1990s
EL			1985	
E		1978	1985, 1986, 1988	1990, 1995
F	1932, 1945	1970, 1977	1983, 1985, 1986, 1989	1990, 1991, 1994
IRL		1975	1985	1992, [1995]
I		1974		1993
L	1912, 1963	1973, 1975	1981	1991
NL			1981, 1987	1992
A	1962	1974	1986	1993, 1996
P		1976, 1977, 1979, 1980	1982, 1987, 1988	1990, 1991, 1993
FIN	1931, 1957, 1958, 1968	1970	1983	1992
S				1994, 1996
UK (E/W)		1980	1986, 1988	1992, 1994
(NI)			1986, 1989	
(SC)			1981, 1988, 1989	1991, 1993, 1996
IS		1974		1991, 1995
LI		1971, 1972		
NO	1969		1988	

NB: [ ] = proposed reform
Germany: Since the 1970s, dates differ between *Länder*.

3. Parents' associations

There are associations of parents and national federations in all Member States of the European Union and the EFTA/EEA countries. They are not all organised in the same way. Representation varies as do the methods of coordination.

In certain countries, depending on the sector and the level of education, parents' associations are less common and less active. In Greece, Spain, Austria and Portugal, they are covered by the legislation on schools.

At European level, the task of coordination in undertaken by a number of federations:
- European Parents Association (EPA);
- *Confédération des organisations familiales de la Communauté européenne* (COFACE);
- *Groupement international des associations de parents de l'enseignement catholique* (OE-GIAPEC).

4. Parent representation at different levels of educational management [2]

As shown in Table 2, it is at the **level of the school** that participation is most common in all the Member States of the European Union and the EFTA/EEA countries. At the national and intermediate – regional/local – levels, parents are not always represented on consultative bodies even where these exist. The German Community of Belgium and Italy alone have a consultative council at national or central level (*Pädagogische Kommission* and *Consiglio Nazionale della Pubblica Istruzione*, respectively) on which parents are not represented.[1]

In contrast, in some countries there are bodies consisting exclusively of parents (in bold type and underlined in Table 2). These are generally established at national level and their role is to consult with the Minister, as is the case in Belgium (French Community), Ireland, Austria, Sweden and Norway. This type of body is found at intermediate (regional/local) and/or school level in Germany, Sweden, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Germany, Sweden and Norway are the only ones of these countries with exclusive representation for parents at all levels.

[1] The break-down of the system of education administration into 'levels' (national or central, intermediate - regional/local - and school) raises issues of terminology (common usage of the expression "local authority") and of interpretation (choice of categories). In most countries, the central level is the same as the national level and the intermediate level corresponds to regional, provincial and local authorities. However, in Belgium, where education powers were transferred to the Communities, these bodies are classified here as the central level. It should be noted that, in Germany, the central level is represented by the national/federal level and the *Länder*, which enjoy full powers in relation to school education, are considered to be the intermediate level. In Spain, in view of the transition towards transfer of powers, the Autonomous Communities are also categorised as intermediate level.

[2] For more information on the different organisations, see *Consultative Councils and Other Forms of Social Participation in Education in the European Union*, EURYDICE, 1996.

Table 2: Participatory bodies including parents (by level of administration)

	National or central level	Intermediate level		School level
		Land, region, province	municipality, town	
B (fr)	**Conseil des parents d'élèves de la Communauté française (CPECF)** Conseil de l'Éducation et de la Formation (CEF)			Conseil de participation
(nl)	Vlaams Onderwijsraad (VLOR)			Lokale raden – LORGO's Participatie Raad
(de)				
DK	Folkeskolerådet Skole og Samfund			Skolebestyrelse
D		**Representative body of parents in almost all *Länder*:** Landeselternbeirat (differs between *Länder*) Landesschulbeirat (differs between *Länder*)	**Kreiselternbeirat** (differs between *Länder*) Schulbeirat, etc. (differs between *Länder*)	**Schulelternbeirat (Parents' Council)** Schulkonferenz, etc. (differs between *Länder*)
EL	Ethniko Symvoulio Pedias – E.SY.P.	Nomarchiaki or Eparchiaki Epitropi Pedias	Dimotiki or Koinotiki Epitropi Pedias	Scholiki Epitropi Scholiko Symvoulio
E	Consejo Escolar del Estado	Consejo Escolar de la Comunidad Autónoma Consejo Escolar provincial	Consejo Escolar municipal	Consejo Escolar del centro
F	Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation (CSE)	Conseil académique de l'Éducation nationale (CAEN) Conseil académique de la vie lycéenne Conseil Départemental de l'Éducation nationale (CDEN)		Conseil d'école Conseil d'administration Commission d'appel Commission préparatoire à l'affectation des élèves Commission permanente des collèges et lycées Conseil de classe
IRL	**National Parents' Council-Primary (NPC-P)** **National Parents' Council-Post-Primary (NPC-PP)** Committees within the Ministry	Regional Education Board (proposed) Vocational Education Committee		Board of Management
I		Consiglio scolastico provinciale Consiglio scolastico distrettuale		Consiglio di circolo Consiglio di istituto Giunta esecutiva Consiglio di interclasse Consiglio di classe
L	Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation nationale Commission d'instruction		Commission scolaire	Conseil d'Éducation
NL	Onderwijsoverleg Primaire en Voortgezet Onderwijs – POVO Several consultative committees			Medezeggenschapsraad
A	Schulreformkommission **Elternbeirat beim Bundesministerium für Unterricht und Kulturelle Angelegenheiten**	Kollegien der Landesschulräte	Kollegien der Bezirksschulräte	Schulforum Klassenforum Schulgemeinschaftsausschuß
P	Conselho Nacional de Educação			Conselho de escola Conselho pedagógico Conselho de turma
FIN				Johtokunta/Direktion
S	**Hem och Skola**		**Hem och Skola** Förvaltningråd	**Hem och Skola** Förvaltningråd
UK (E/W)				Governing Body
(NI)				Board of Governors
(SC)				School Board
IS	Námsgangwastofmun		Skolanefnd	**Foreldraráð**
LI	Landesschulrat		Gemeindeschulrat	**Elternbeirat/Elternvereinigung**
NO	**Foreldreutvalget for grunnskolen - FUG**		**Kommunale foreldreutvalg**	Samarbeidsutvalg **Foreldreråd** **Foreldrerådets arbeidsutvalg - FAU**

NB: **Bodies composed exclusively of parents are underlined and in bold type.**

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5. Representation of parents in participatory bodies

The forms of representation vary between countries, depending on the broader political context in which the participatory bodies function.

A list of all the kinds of representation of parents in participatory bodies is given in detail in each national description. Each table includes the following items of information: number of participants, proportion of parents, other categories of members, duration of appointment, method of election or nomination of members, powers, and voting rights.

In most countries, generally speaking, parents have **minority** representation at each of the three levels (central, intermediate – regional/local – and school). **Parity** with other groups is rare. It is found only at intermediate level in Austria *(Kollegien der Landesschulräte* and *Kollegien der Bezirksschulräte)* and at school level in the Flemish Community of Belgium *(Participatie Raad)*, in Spain *(Consejo Escolar del centro* in private grant-aided education), in Italy *(Consiglio di interclasse)*, in the Netherlands *(Medezeggenschapsraad)* and in Austria *(Schulforum* and *Schulgemeinschaftsausschuß)*. In Ireland, at the intermediate level, the Regional Education Boards proposed in the 1995 White Paper would also be based on parity of participation.

Majority representation of parents is found at school level in only two countries, Denmark and Scotland. However, the role played by parents in the respective bodies differs substantially. The Danish school board *(Skolebestyrelse)* has important powers of decision. On the other hand, the Scottish bodies at the same level (School Boards) have a mainly consultative function; their influence produces a delicate balance of powers, possibly delegated by consent but always under the control of the Scottish Local Authorities (SLAs).

Bodies composed **exclusively of parents** (underlined and in bold type in Table 2), may be found at all levels: at central level (French Community of Belgium, Ireland, Austria, Sweden and Norway) and at intermediate and/or school level (in almost all *Länder* in Germany, Sweden, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).

Maps 1 and 2 show the different kinds of parent representation. This may be exclusive (reserved entirely to parents), majority (parents comprise more than half the members), parity (balance across several groups) or minority (parents comprise less than half the members). The presentation is confined to the intermediate (regional/local) and school levels, as all four types of parent representation are found there. At national level, parents are generally in a minority on representative bodies, or in some cases the bodies represent parents exclusively.

Representation of parents on different participatory and management bodies

Map 1. Intermediate level

Map 2. School level

Minority | Parity | Majority and/or exclusivity | No participation

Germany: The representation of parents varies between *Länder*, according to the type of body at regional or local level and also at school level.

Spain: The representation of parents at school level *(Consejo Escolar del centro)* varies depending on the type of school. The number of parent representatives plus the number of pupil representatives must be not less than one third of the members of the council. In private grant-aided schools, parents have parity of representation.

Italy: Parents have minority representation on the various councils at school level, with the exception of the *Consiglio di interclasse* where it can also be on a parity basis.

Sweden: In the school consultative councils, recently introduced, the numbers of parents vary.

Norway: Both at intermediate and school level, there are exclusively parent councils; there are also councils on which parents are in a minority.

As regards **methods of designating parent representatives**, they are normally elected from among the members of the association.

At the central level, those most often involved are members of national federations. They have been elected from members at the local level, but usually in successive stages and rarely by direct suffrage. At school level, they are mainly elected from the parents of the school or the class; they can also be delegates on participatory bodies at local or regional level (Germany). There may be a concern to achieve a balance in representation by 'objective' criteria, such as the equal numbers of men and women proposed in the White Paper in Ireland.

Other rules sometimes apply – for instance, the choice of representatives can be by nomination at the discretion of a public or private authority, as in Luxembourg.

6. Powers of participatory bodies which include parents

There are two types of power: consultative and decision-making. **Consultation (C)** is understood as the right to information as well as the right or obligation to give opinions, either on request or spontaneously. **Decision-making** comprises all the processes involved, including preliminary approval, decision-taking and execution of the decision.

The participatory bodies which include parents at national or intermediate – regional/local – level (Table 3) are mainly consultative, with rare exceptions such as in Austria, at the *Länder* and district levels, in Liechtenstein at the levels of the *Landesschulrat* and the *Gemeindeschulrat* and in Norway at the municipal level. For instance, in Austria, both the collegiate assembly of federal authorities at the *Länder* level *(Kollegien der Landesschulräte)* and the collegiate assembly at district level *(Kollegien der Bezirksschulräte)* adopt decrees and general directives and play an important role in the appointment of teachers and headteachers at secondary level; parent representatives on these bodies have full voting rights.

On the other hand, participatory bodies at school level are often given powers which extend to decision-making. These competences are of two kinds:

- decisions (**d**) on a number of aspects of the internal day-to-day management of the school, for example drawing up of timetables, organisation of extra-curricular activities, maintenance of good parent-teacher relations, and control of expenditure;
- decisions (**D**) relating to key aspects of the overall running of the education system, including for example the allocation of the school's budget, determination of the number of teaching and non-teaching staff and recruiting and selecting them (in some cases also the selection of the headteacher), and the determination of curricula and teaching methods.

Decisions of the first type are taken by participatory bodies in the majority of countries, primarily at school level. The second kind is found only in the countries shaded grey in Table 3 – Denmark, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Austria, Portugal, part of the United Kingdom (England and Wales and Northern Ireland), Liechtenstein and Norway. In the Danish *Skolebestyrelse*, parents are the principal decision-makers since they constitute the majority of members. They take decisions mainly in relation to the school budget and are also consulted in the selection of the headteacher.

The election or dismissal of the headteacher is one of the functions of the school council in Spain *(Consejo Escolar del centro)* and Portugal *(Conselho de escola)*, in which parents participate, although in a minority. In Ireland, the Boards of Management participate in the appointment of headteachers.[4]

Governing Bodies in England and Wales and Boards of Governors in Northern Ireland not only participate in the appointment of the headteacher but are also responsible for determining the general objectives of the school and the management of staff (fixing the number of, and selecting and recruiting, teaching and non-teaching staff) and of resources. Parent governors are fully involved in these decision-making processes, although they have only minority representation.

In Greece, on the school committee *(Scholiki Epitropi)*, parent representatives can exercise the right of veto if they are not in agreement with the management of the school, provided that this is based on a sufficiently good knowledge of the legislation in force to sustain their point of view before the other members of the committee.

Finally, Sweden has recently (1996) introduced different kinds of councils in which parents participate. But these councils have still not been established in all municipalities and schools; where they exist, they tend to have an information and consultation role, though they may take certain decisions.

[4] For more details see *School Heads in the European Union*, EURYDICE, 1996.

Table 3 provides an overview of the powers at each level.

Table 3: Powers according to level

	National or central level	Intermediate level (regional/local)	School level
B (fr)	C		Cd
(nl)	C		Cd
(de)			Cd
DK	C		**CDd**
D		C	Cd
EL	C	C	**CD**
E	C	C	**CDd**
F	C	C	Cd
IRL	C	C	**CDd**
I		Cd	Cd
L	C	Cd	C
NL	C		Cd
A	C	**CD**	Cd
P	C		**CDd**
FIN			Cd
S	C	Cd	Cd
UK (E/W, NI)			**CDd**
(SC)			Cd
IS	C	C	Cd
LI	**Dd**	**CDd**	C
NO	C	**CDd**	Cd

C: Consultation.
d: First type of decisions.
D: Second type of decisions.
The shading indicates bodies with at least the second type of decision-making powers (D).

Germany: There is variation between one *Land* and another.

7. Training for parents

In most Member States of the European Union and the EFTA/EEA countries, training is provided for parents, most often in the form of courses or seminars. The aim of these is in general to give parents (or their representatives) a better preparation for taking part in school affairs and in their children's education. In some countries, training for parents is virtually non-existent (Luxembourg, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway) or an a somewhat *ad hoc* basis (Italy, Portugal and Liechtenstein).

The sources of funding for this training vary. It can be financed by public or private bodies or by parents' associations themselves. Public authorities fund training in the Flemish Community of Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Parents can also take modular training financed by private or local initiative in Belgium (French and German-speaking Communities), Germany, Greece (depending on the individual association) and Austria. Sometimes it is the parents' associations which arrange and finance training courses (Spain and Ireland).

In the Netherlands alone, there is specific legislation recognising the need to train parents to enable them to participate fully in the activities of the school council.

Map 3 below shows how training for parents is funded.

Map 3. Funding of training for parents

Funded through public bodies

Funded by parents' associations

Funded through private or local initiatives

None or *ad hoc*

Since it was established in 1983, the European federation of parents' associations (European Parents Association – EPA) has been active in planning and developing training programmes and has also arranged many training seminars for parents and their representatives.

NATIONAL DESCRIPTIONS

BELGIUM

Structure of education

Education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 18.
Within each of the three Communities (French, Flemish and German-speaking), the Belgian education system is based on the coexistence of three networks, bringing together:
- schools administered by the Communities;
- schools administered by the communes and provinces (official grant-aided network);
- "free" schools, with or without a connection with a religion, which are administered by an "organising authority" established under private law (free grant-aided network).

As of 1 January 1989, responsibility for educational matters was transferred to the three Communities. The federal state retains responsibility for determining the start and finish of compulsory schooling, the minimum conditions to be fulfilled for the award of qualifications, and the pension scheme for teachers.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

The law on education gives parents the option of providing education to their children at home or in completely private schools which are not subject to the state regulations governing schools.
Parents are responsible for enrolling their children in school and for assuring their regular attendance (Law on compulsory schooling, Article 3); they are also responsible to the judicial authorities (Article 5).
Parents' right of **free choice of a school** for their children is anchored in Article 24 of the Constitution which stipulates that "Education is free; all preventive measures are prohibited; ... The Community protects parents' freedom of choice." Parents thus have a free choice of schools. If their request for admission to a school is refused, they have the right to bring the matter before the courts.
The Communities administer secular education (Article 24, paragraph 4 of the Constitution). A decree issued by the French Community underscores this notion of secularism.
School guidance for minor pupils as regards the various types of education (full- or part-time special education, ordinary general education, technical education, or vocational education) can only be provided with their parents' consent.
Parents have the right to appeal before the courts decisions taken by schools, in particular, decisions of class councils (promotion from one year to the next) and rejections of enrolment.

2. Collective rights

Parents' rights within the education system differ markedly between the three Communities and vary from one network to another.
In the **French Community**, parental representation on several centralised consultative councils is highly structured and is established by law.
At local level, Community education (enrolling 20% of the school population) is the only network to have a decree instituting school councils which represent parents within schools.
Parents in the **Flemish Community** have structured representation at two levels: Community and local.
In both the French and Flemish Communities, Catholic education has its own system of services, involving parents at every level without, however, impinging on the prerogatives of the organising authorities.
In the **German-speaking Community**, parents are not represented on the consultative body at Community level *(Pädagogische Kommission)*. Only Catholic education offers parents participation in the regional

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and diocesan planning and coordination councils (RPKA and CDPC). At local level, parents' associations are generally consulted by the organising authorities.

Legislation

1970:	Belgium creates a consultative council at national level.
1984:	In the **German-speaking Community**, Article 23 of Regulation K.E. of 30 August 1984 provides for the consultation of parents of *Kindergarten* and primary school pupils with respect to the use of teaching time and the mandatory communication of decisions on this matter.
1990:	The **French Community of Belgium** develops provisions to ensure parental participation in the schools it administers.
1997:	Laying of a draft decree defining the priority aims of secondary education and organising appropriate structures for achieving them, in which the participation and role of parents are defined and strengthened.
1988 and 1991:	The **Flemish Community** introduces a generalised system of parental participation.
1993:	Creation of the *Vlaams Onderwijsraad* – VLOR (Flemish education council).

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FRENCH COMMUNITY

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
Central level Community	*Conseil des parents des élèves de la Communauté française* CPECF (French Community Parents' Council)	- number: exclusively parents (27 parent representatives) - term: 4 years	6 FAPEO, 6 UFAPEC, 1 president, 2 vice-presidents chosen by the Executive, 12 members chosen by the Ministers concerned from those proposed by parents' associations.	- consult with the Minister; - give opinions on all general problems of education on own initiative or at the request of the Minister.	
	Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation – CEF (Education and Training Council)	- number: minority (6 parent representatives out of 32 members) - term: 4 years	Representatives chosen by parents' associations.	- consultation on all issues related to education.	
	Committees and councils (more than 20), e.g. the *Conseil supérieur de l'enseignement spécial* (Higher Council on Special Education), ZEP Committee (educational priority areas)	- number: minority - term: variable	Representatives chosen by parents' associations.	- consultation.	
Intermediate	No parents' participation				
School	*Conseil de participation* (Participation Council: compulsory in schools in the Community network, but depending on local initiatives in schools of the other networks)	- number: minority (2 to 4 parent representatives out of 12 to 15 members depending on the size of the school) - term: 3 years	Representatives delegated by the parents' associations.	- information on use of budget for running costs and on educational innovations; - consultation and proposals in the areas of education (educational project and relations with external bodies), and facilities and administration (renovation of facilities, advertising, social welfare of pupils).	- organisation of events in support of the school.

FLEMISH COMMUNITY

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
Central level Community	*Vlaams Onderwijsraad* (VLOR) (Flemish Council on Education)	- number: minority (4 parent representatives out of 37 members) - term: 4 years (possibility of renewal)	Representatives of official education (NVO) and Catholic education (NCVO).	- consultation: compulsory or own-initiative opinion on all preliminary proposals; - decrees and circulars; except on the annual budget.	
Intermediate	No parents' participation				
School Community education network	*Lokale raden* – LORGOs (local councils)	- number: minority (5 parent representatives out of 15 members or 4 out of 12) - term: 5 years	Elected by parents and teachers of the school.		- decision-making powers on matters relating to internal school management.
Grant-aided education network	*Participatieraad* (Participation Council)	- number: parity of representation (1 parent representative out of 4 members, with teacher, organising authority and local community) or minority - term: 4 years	Elected by parents.	- information about all matters affecting the school; - compulsory consultation prior to any decision by the organising authority; where there is a consensus in the council, organising authority required to implement decision; - advice and counsel; - approval (in "free" education only).	

GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
Central level Community	Parents do not participate in the *Pädagogische Kommission*.				
Intermediate	No parents' participation				
School	No statutory provision for parent representation in the "class council" but the school organising body's autonomous status makes it possible for it to decide for parents to be represented.			- opinions on matters relating to the daily life and operations of the school.	- decision-making powers on matters relating to internal school management.

Associations

There are various parents' associations organised on denominational/humanist lines and by Community. There is a relatively well-organised structure of parents' associations at both local and central level in each of the three Communities. The many associations are sometimes informal and often very active within the schools.

In the French Community:

FAPEO: *Fédération des associations de parents de l'enseignement officiel* (Federation of parents' associations in official education).

UFAPEC: *Union des féderations d'associations de parents de l'enseignement catholique* (Union of the federations of parents' associations in Catholic education).

In the Flemish Community:

NVO: *Nationaal nederlandstalig verbond van oudervereniging van het officieel onderwijs* (National Dutch-speaking union of parents' associations in official education).

EVO: *Educatieve vereniging voor ouderwerking in het officieel onderwijs* (Educational association of parents in official education).

NCVO: *Nationale confederatie van ouders en oudervereniging van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap* (National confederation of parents and associations of parents in the Flemish Community) representing associations of parents of pupils in Catholic education.

VCOV: *Vlaamse confederatie van oudervereniging* (Flemish confederation of parents' associations).

In the German-speaking Community:

EGS: *Elternverband der Gemeinschaftsschulen* is the association of parents of pupils in Community education.

VER: *Verband der Elternräte* is the association of parents of pupils in grant-aided Catholic education and, in part, of those in grant-aided official education. This association represents affiliated local parents' associations.

Training

The **French and German-speaking Communities** have no systematic training programmes for parents or teachers concerning family-school relations or participation. Federations of associations and local organisations (general confederation of teachers) offer short training modules on family-school relations, and some of these are financed by the government.

The government of the **Flemish Community** has been funding training organised by recognised parents' associations since 1 April 1996.

DENMARK

Structure of education

Education is compulsory between the ages of 7 and 16.
The state administers public education mainly through local authorities:
- the municipality for pre-school education *(børnehaveklasse)* and basic compulsory schooling *(folkeskole)*, which is coeducational and free, with no distinction between primary and lower secondary level (from 7 to 16 years);
- the county in the case of general upper secondary education. The great majority of upper secondary schools are administered directly by the state.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Parents have the right:
- to free **choice of a school**: this right of parents is specified in the Act on the *folkeskole*, which states that parents shall be entitled to have their child enrolled in a school in the district where the child lives or is resident. Parents shall moreover be entitled to have their child enrolled in a school outside the district, if the school in question consents to enrol the child, and if it can be done within the overall financial framework laid down by the municipal council. Parents have the right of appeal to the municipal council if the school they have chosen does not consent to enrol their child;
- to free choice of the type of education;
- to have the final say on whether their children change school and on whether a boarding school is used by or organised for them;
- to take responsibility for certain lessons;
- to file complaints according to established procedures;
- to have the final say on whether to hold back or advance their child by a year;
- to receive various kinds of information about the assessment of instruction;
- to be consulted, along with the child, concerning the subjects in which the child will sit examinations;
- to set up a private school, in which case a certain minimum number of pupils is required in order for the school to be eligible for public grants.

2. Collective rights

Parents are represented and consulted in the *folkeskole* and in the *gymnasium* (general upper secondary education).

Legislation

1970: The *Skolenævn* (school board), offering a decentralised and diversified system for the consultation of parents, is created.
1990: The Act introducing the new school boards *(Skolebestyrelse)* with major parental influence came into force.
1993: Act on the *folkeskole* establishes the *folkeskole* Council *(Folkeskolerådet)*, a national body.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	*Folkeskolerådet* (*Folkeskole* Council)	- number: minority (2 parent representatives out of 15 members) - term: 3 years	Upon recommendation by *Skole og Samfund*.	- advisory to the Minister for Education; - may recommend the initiation of innovation work and research projects in relation to the *folkeskole* to the Minister for Education.	
	Skole og Samfund (School and Society)	An umbrella organisation with 15 independent local departments, called county associations. In their boards, the normal electoral period is 2 years	The members of the boards of the local associations are elected from and among the school boards of the individual schools.	- consultation on important issues; - information and documentation; - formal participation in the *Folkeskolerådet;* - organises training, produces publications.	
Intermediate County Municipality	No parents' participation				
School	*Skolebestyrelse* (school board)	- number: majority (5 to 7 parent representatives out of 10 to 13 members, including chairman) - term: 4 years	Each independent school sets up a *skolebestyrelse*, whose parent members are elected from and among persons with custody of children enrolled in the school; representation of parents is determined by law.	- provision of information to parents; - consultation on the appointment of teachers; - proposal of school curriculum to the Municipal Council; The *Skolebestyrelse* submits recommendations to the Municipal Council and responds to its requests for information.	- decisions on major aspects of operations: optional choice of subjects, timetable, assignment of pupils to classes, rules on teaching, rules of procedure, etc. - **decision (Type D)** on approval of the budget. Consultation on the procedures to recruit the school head (applicants are evaluated and recommendations are made by the *Skolebestyrelse*.)

Associations

The *Skole og Samfund* (School and Society) association represents 88% of concerned groups: parents' associations, elected members of school boards, and individual parents.

Training

The major parent association, *Skole og Samfund* organises courses all over the country with the aim of strengthening the *Skolebestyrelse* in their work. The topics may be: school-home cooperation, contact with parents, the powers of the *Skolebestyrelse*, and financial decentralisation. These courses are financed through user payment, and the school board members' participation in the courses is paid for through the individual school's budget (i.e. indirect public financing).

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GERMANY

Structure of education

The duration of compulsory general and vocational education is, in general, 12 years and starts at the age of 6. The 9 or 10 years of full-time compulsory education at a general education school is followed by three years of compulsory part-time education at a vocational school in cases where education is not continued at a full-time general education or vocational school.
Responsibility for education in the Federal Republic of Germany is determined by the federal state structure. The Basic Law *(Grundgesetz*, Article 7) stipulates that the education system as a whole is subject to the state. The Basic Law also divides the exercise of state powers and the fulfilment of state duties between the federation and the *Länder* and makes these matters for the *Länder* in all areas except those where the Basic Law provides for a derogation (Article 30). Most powers relating to legislation and administration in education lie with the *Länder*. This applies, in particular, to primary, secondary and higher education as well as to adult and continuing education.
Heading the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science of the 16 *Länder* are the ministers (senators, in the city states of Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg), responsible to the respective parliaments, who lay down the guidelines for education policy, enact legal and administrative provisions and exercise control over the subordinate authorities and educational institutions.
The Ministers for Education, Culture and Science of the *Länder* work together within the Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Culture of the *Länder (Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepubik Deutschland)*. This Conference is an instrument of cooperation which aims to create a common and comparable basic structure for the education system in Germany.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

The Basic Law enacted in 1949 considers the care and upbringing of children as both a natural right and a duty of parents. "The care and upbringing of children are the natural rights of parents as well as the first and foremost duty incumbent upon them. The exercising of these rights is watched over by the State" (*Grundgesetz* – Basic Law, Article 6, paragraph 2).
Parents and the State therefore have a joint educational duty that can only be fulfilled through meaningful cooperation between parents and the school. The basic principles and details of this cooperation are set out in the constitutions of the *Länder* and school statutes as well as in other educational law provisions enacted by the *Länder*. Cooperation between parents and schools is particularly important where decisions are made in relation to children's further school careers, where a child has particular difficulties or where handicapped children need to be supported and encouraged as effectively as possible.
With regard to parents' right to **choose the school** for their children, a distinction must be drawn between selecting the type of school and admission to a particular public or private school. At the primary level, children subject to compulsory schooling enter a primary school which is the same for all children.
Transition from primary school to one of the school types at the secondary level is subject to different regulations depending on *Land* legislation. The type of school to be attended at the lower secondary level is decided by the parents on the basis of an assessment made by the primary school. Admission to the various types of schools at secondary level is, however, dependent upon pupils fulfilling certain performance criteria and/or a decision made by the education authority.
Parents' right of choice can be restricted by the delimitations of school catchment areas. Pupils pursuing their compulsory secondary education at a *Hauptschule* (lower secondary) or a *Berufsschule* (vocational

school) must attend the local school of this type. In as far as catchment areas do not exist for schools at the upper secondary level (e.g. *Gymnasium)*, parents have a free choice of school. However, this choice can be limited by the admission capacity of the school concerned.
To meet the requirements of compulsory schooling, parents also have the right to select a private school for their children which has been approved as a substitute for public schools by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the relevant *Land.* Private schools are, however, fairly exceptional.
Parents' rights include a right to information about matters connected with the school. This right relates to all facts that are of fundamental importance for the exercise of their individual parental rights with respect to education.
Other aspects of the rights of parents vary from one *Land* to the next. In North Rhine-Westphalia, for example, parents have the right to participate in some of their child's school activities.

2. Collective rights

It is also open to parents to exercise rights in collective decision-making bodies, such as the co-determination committees *(Mitbestimmungsgremien),* at school level and beyond. Co-determination in this context is taken to mean the representation of parents' interests which, depending on the *Land* in question, can involve more or less extensive participation and/or co-decision rights of parents' representatives elected or delegated at the various levels (class, school, municipality, district, *Land).* However, major decisions in educational matters are, in all the *Länder,* a matter for teachers and their conferences and/or the inspectorate.
As a rule, the relevant regulations provide for parental participation in two different forms: in and via forums in which only parents are represented and, on the other hand, through joint forums in which other persons involved in the school (teachers, pupils, etc.) are represented together with parents' representatives.
Generally, parent participation within the school can take place at two levels, at a lower level in the child's class as well as at an upper level which involves the school as a whole. This is followed by action at the local level (municipal or district) and, finally, by the *Land* level.
The representation of parents at *Land* level is, as a rule, provided for by parents' councils which have different names in different *Länder.* These are official bodies through which parents can participate in decisions relating to school affairs. They are purely advisory in some *Länder,* notably in Berlin, but go as far as to give parents extensive rights of joint management (e.g. in Hesse).
In the context of joint forums, various concepts of collective management have been developed at *Land* level. These include:
– statutory consultation of interested groups on school matters of general and fundamental significance, e.g. in North Rhine-Westphalia;
– the setting up of a standing advisory forum in the area of education and training, e.g. in Bavaria.
In the parents' forums at local level (municipality, district, *Land),* parents' representatives have – in the majority of *Länder* – combined to form joint parents' councils.
In most of the *Länder,* school consultative councils are formed as joint participation bodies, including all the groups involved in school affairs at local level *(Schulbeiräte);* these are known variously as the *Bezirksschulbeirat, Schulkommission* etc. The churches and local authorities can in certain cases also have representatives on these committees.
At school level, parents' interests are represented in the majority of *Länder* by parents' councils *(Elternbeiräte),* which are purely parent bodies. The school head or teachers' representatives normally attend the meetings of the school's parents' council in an advisory capacity.
It is usually the school conference *(Schulkonferenz)* – also referred to as the school forum *(Schulforum),* school community *(Schulgemeinde)* or school committee *(Schulausschuß)* – that is the participatory body in which representatives of parents and pupils can work closely together with the school head and teachers.
At class level, parents' interests are taken into account through parents' meetings (known as *Klassenelternschaft, Elternrat, Klassenelternvertretung,* etc.). At this level, a number of *Länder* have set up what are known as *Klassenpflegschaften* as joint participation forums with equal numbers of teachers, parents and pupils (e.g. in Baden-Württemberg, Bremen, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Saxony-Anhalt).

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Legislation

Apart from some *Land* constitutions that expressly grant parental rights of joint management, there are no statutory provisions relating to participation at constitutional level. Parents' collective rights are, however, explicitly provided for by the *Länder* in specific statutes relating to participation and joint management in schools and also in schools' legislation and in legislation on compulsory education, school regulations and school administration. Other matters are covered in various legal and administrative provisions.

The following are some key dates in relation to the institutionalising of parents' representative bodies in the *Länder* school system since 1918.

1918-39: In several German *Länder* (Prussia, Bavaria, Baden, Saxony, Bremen, Hamburg and Thuringia), parents' councils were set up either at all schools generally (e.g. Prussia) or in the higher teaching institutions (Bavaria and Baden). In Bavaria, the parents' representative body in the *Volksschulen* (primary schools) was regulated differently, in the form of a *Schulpflegschaft*.

1939-45: Abolition of parents' councils during the period of National Socialism.

After 1945: Following the Second World War, parents' councils were set up in the *Länder* once again. Based on the conviction that the school should adhere to democratic principles in its internal organisation, general participation rights of teachers and pupils were recognised. These rights took different forms in the various *Länder*. The parents' council in Hesse, for example, had the "function of participating in an advisory and helpful manner in school affairs..." (decree issued 10 May 1945). In North Rhine-Westphalia, parents contribute through their representative bodies to the "shaping of the education system" (First Act Governing the Organisation of the School System in North Rhine-Westphalia, passed in 1952).

Early 1970s: Parents' rights of participation were extended in both qualitative and institutional terms either in education legislation or in specific laws, e.g. introduction of a school participation statute in North Rhine-Westphalia in 1977 and fundamental changes to parents' participation rights in the Basic Education Act in Hamburg in 1973.

Since then, increasing consideration has been given to parents' rights of participation in new education legislation introduced by the *Länder*, e.g. in the amended versions of the Education Acts in Lower Saxony in 1993 and in Hesse in 1992.

Education law in the five "new *Länder*" also gives comparable recognition to parents' rights, the scope of which is to a considerable extent based on the provisions in the "old *Länder*".

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Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
Federal	No statutory provision for a parents' representative body; but free association of representative bodies as in the Federal Parents' Council *(Bundeselternrat)*	- number: exclusively parents			
Land	In almost all *Länder*, there is a representative body for parents at *Land* level; various titles ***(Landeseltern(bei)rat,*** *Landeselternausschuß, Elternkammer, Landeselternvertretung)*	- number: exclusively parents - term: varies according to *Land*	Varies according to *Land*.	Varies according to *Land;* as a rule, extensive right to information and explanations; sometimes ranges from an advisory function to rights of co-determination.	
	Varies according to *Land;* as a rule, setting up a ***Landesschulbeirat*** (consultative council); these have different names – e.g. *Landesschulkonferenz* – and areas of responsibility	- number: varies according to *Land;* total number of representatives varies	Varies according to *Land;* as a rule, a forum for all groups involved in school life.	Generally, an information and advisory function for matters of particular importance for the school.	
	Example: Bavaria *Landesschulbeirat* (consultative body)	- number: minority (8 parent representatives out of 43 members)	Appointed by the *Land* Minister for Education and Cultural Affairs.	- advises the Minister for Education and Cultural Affairs. Binding consultation on larger-scale projects, in particular for developing curricula, defining and modifying school regulations, pupils' records, and changes affecting parents' representation; - makes suggestions, expressing recommendations for plans of particular importance on which the council must be consulted.	

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
District, town municipality	Varies according to *Land*; almost all *Länder* have a district parents' council ***(Kreiselternbeirat)***. Varies according to *Land*, but they do not exist everywhere. (The name varies depending on the *Land*: *Schulbeirat, Bezirksschulbeirat, Kreisschulbeirat*, etc.)	- number: exclusively parents; - term: varies according to *Land* Varies according to *Land*	Varies according to *Land*. Varies according to *Land*.	Information and consultation on activities at local level. Varies according to *Land*.	
School	***Schulelternbeirat*** (school parents' council)	- number: exclusively parents - term: varies according to *Land*	Varies according to *Land*. Right to send delegates to the *Schulkonferenz*.	As a rule, advisory function in relation to school matters.	
	Example 1: Bavaria *Elternbeirat* (Parents' Council)	- number: exclusively parents, 1 parents' representative for 50 pupils (min. 5, max. 12 members)		- advisory function in matters of general importance: general discussion of parents' proposals and suggestions; - obligation to consider proposals made by the *Elternbeirat*.	
	Example 2: North Rhine-Westphalia *Schulpflegschaft*	- number: exclusively parents (chairmen of *Pflegschaften* of the classes or years; participation of school head as deputy chairman) - term: 1 school year		- consultative function: selection of chairman and representatives to the *Schulkonferenz* and subject conferences; - joint management.	entitled to take decisions.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
	Varies according to *Land*: ***Schulkonferenz***, *Schulforum*, *Schulgemeinde*, *Schulausschuß* (joint management body involving parents)	Varies according to *Land*. Composed of representatives of parents, teachers and pupils	Varies according to *Land*	Functions vary according to *Land*: consultative function and involved in: - different aspects of daily school life and education; - some questions relating to school buildings and equipment; - selection procedures for school heads (in certain *Länder*).	in certain *Länder*, right of joint decision in relation to: - introduction of additional courses and activities; - introduction of five-day week; - choice of textbooks.
	Example 1: Bavaria *Schulforum* (School Forum) - cooperative body in which parents take part	- number: parity 3 parent representatives out of 9 members (3 teachers, 3 pupils and 3 parents)		- consultative function and recommendations - positions on important issues related to school life.	
	Example 2: North-Rhine Westphalia *Schulkonferenz*	- number: 6 to 36, depending on school size; composition varies according to education level; chaired by school head - term: 1 school year		- recommendations on basic principles, such as structure of course content, use of teaching methods, distribution and organisation of class hours, uniform application of regulations regarding performance assessment.	- decision-making in the following areas: coordination of homework, proposals to school authorities, additional school events, study groups, etc.

NB: The most common designation of the various types of council appears in bold type.

Associations

There are many parents' associations. In addition, the *Bundeselternrat* is a free association at federal level of the representative parent bodies at *Land* level.

Training

The provision of training for parents is generally a matter for private initiative. It can also be promoted by parents' associations at federal or *Land* level through the provision of information for parents and the organisation of conferences.

GREECE

Structure of education

Education is compulsory from the ages of 6 to 15.
The Ministry of Education has extensive control over the education system. The Ministry has supervisory authority over the system and monitors every aspect, from the decision to establish a school, the recruitment and management of staff, the development of curricula and timetables for teaching in all subjects to the choice and distribution of textbooks. In recent years, some powers have been devolved to local authorities (prefectures and local communities) and schools.
At local level, the Education Committees manage the funds allocated by the Ministry for each school.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Every child has the right to free education from primary school to higher education in state schools under the principle of equal opportunity. Free education is provided by state schools in accordance with the Constitution and in keeping with the principle of equal opportunity.
There are also fee-paying private schools to which parents are free to send their children.
The **choice of school** at primary and secondary level is based on geographical proximity (Presidential Decree of 1979 – 104/79). In upper secondary education (ages 15 to 18), schools are chosen based on the type of school in which pupils wish to enrol.
At secondary level, if a child fails several subjects or the entire year, parents may ask for their examinations to be re-marked by a higher authority. Parents must submit a form establishing their request to the school head. The pupil's examinations are then sent to a higher authority whose marking, whether it confirms or differs from that of the teacher, is final and cannot be appealed further.
Parents have the right to be informed by the school, and they may consult with teachers on certain days at fixed times. Parents may also obtain information outside of these established days and hours. Teachers are required to inform parents regarding their children's progress and performance at school.

2. Collective rights

By law, parents must be represented at national, municipal, prefectural and school levels (Law 1566/1985). A 1985 law (Article 53, paragraphs 1, 2 and 3) stipulates that parents of pupils in each school must establish a parents' association if they wish to participate in school life. The parents' association thus created bears the name of the school and its statutes must be registered in court, which gives the association a legal character.

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Legislation

1985: Parents' participation at all levels (national, prefectural, local, school) is governed by Law 1566/1985.
The 1985 law (Article 1) on the organisation and functions of parents' associations regulates the election of the governing boards of parents' associations.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	*Ethniko Symvoulio Pedias* – E.SY.P. (National School Council)	- number: minority (1 parent representative out of 97 members) - term: 2 years	Elected by the electoral meeting of the Confederation of Parents.	- all aspects including information and submission of proposals to the respective departments of the Ministry of Education, on education policy at national level, both within the country and abroad. Decisions taken are recommendations and are not binding on the Minister.	
Intermediate Region	No parents' participation				
Prefecture or sub-prefecture	*Nomarchiaki* or *Eparchiaki Epitropi Pedias* (Education Council of the Prefecture or Sub-prefecture)	- number: minority (1 parent representative out of 16 members) - term: 2 years	Elected by the electoral meeting of the Federation of Parents.	- opinion on general educational policy issues (e.g. establishment, closure and mergers of schools; creation and abolition of teaching posts). Distribution of funds to local authorities for the operating needs of schools. The decisions taken are recommendations and are not binding on the Prefectural Council, although it generally acccepts them.	
Municipality or Commune	*Dimotiki* or *Koinotiki Epitropi Pedias* (Municipal or Communal Education Committee)	- number: minority (1 parent representative with the school head, representatives of the municipality or the commune and of local industry) - term: 2 years	Elected by the electoral assembly of the Union of Parents.	- submits proposals to the *Scholiki Epitropi* on the allocation of funds for operating needs; - primary supervision of financial management.	

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
				- consultative role in the running of the *Scholiki Epitropi*; - opinion on all issues relating to school operations within the territory (of the municipality or commune). Decisions taken are recommendations and are not binding on the Municipal or Communal Council. However, as a rule, the Municipal Council accepts them.	
School	*Scholiki Epitropi* (School Committee)	- number: minority (1 parent representative per school out of 5 to 15 members) - term: 2 years	Parents' representatives are elected by the school's general meeting of parents by 1/3 majority of children attending the school.	- management of allocations for school operations and repairs.	- **decision (Type D)** on all financial matters. Decisions are binding on the Committee. Parents can participate on condition that their election was held in accordance with Law 1566/85 and ministerial orders. If this is the case, parent representatives have the right to block management operations if necessary (after considering the degree of priority and the need for the expenditure) and they are sufficiently familiar with the legislation to justify their opinion and can succeed in convincing the other members of the School Committee.
	Scholiko Symvoulio (School Council)	- number: minority (between 5 and 11 members of the executive board of the association of parents with teachers' associations and representatives of the local authorities on the *Scholiki Epitropi* - term: 2 years	The governing board is fully entitled to participate if elections were held in accordance with the provisions stipulated in Law 1566/85 and the related ministerial orders.	- participation in addressing issues related to school operations; taking action to ensure good relations between parents, teachers and pupils.	

Associations

The first parents' associations were established after 1945. Before the initial introduction in 1963 of free education and state responsibility for expenditure, parents' associations collected money and supported schools (by meeting running costs, heating costs, etc.).
In accordance with the 1566/85 law, parents' associations have established unions at local level and elected one representative to the Municipal Education Committee. At prefectural level (prefecture or district), these unions constitute federations and elect one representative to the Prefectural Education Committee. At national level, these federations form the Supreme Parents' Confederation of Greece (A.S.G.M.E.) which elects one representative to the National Education Council.
The 1566/85 law and ministerial order H/9876/85 regulate the election of governing boards and representatives and require voting by secret ballot.
The Constitution's definition of parents' rights and obligations stipulates that no parent may be excluded from a parents' association.

Training

No specific training is provided by the state. Fifteen years ago, some municipalities set up "parents' schools" *(Scholes Goneon)*, although these have been on the decline in recent years. Seminars for parents have been organised as private initiatives, basically inspired by parents' associations, unions or federations, depending on how active the individual groups are. These initiatives are not synonymous with direct parent involvement in the education system.

SPAIN

Structure of education

Education is compulsory from the age of 6 to 16.
Due to the status of the 17 Autonomous Communities, education is considered a responsibility shared between the state and the Communities. Some of the Autonomous Communities already have full powers in the field of education and have set up their own administrative bodies; others have not yet received from the central education administration the means necessary to exercise their full powers.
Those Communities which have full powers over education are responsible for recruitment, appointment and training of teaching and non-teaching staff, for the integration of national education plans with courses and subjects of regional interest and for financing private schools (attended by 1/3 of pupils).
The central state has exclusive authority over:
– regulations on the awarding of academic diplomas;
– the adoption and application of basic directives concerning the constitutional right to education.
There is an integrated network of public and approved private schools (100% grant-aided).

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

The rights and obligations of parents are regulated by a 1985 law (LODE) which stipulates that parents have the right to choose schools other than those offered by the public authorities. Since the only real limit on freedom of choice is the capacity of the school, four statutory criteria have been established for selection when the school's capacity has been reached: family income, distance from home, whether siblings are already enrolled in the school and whether the applicant is disabled in any way. These criteria apply to primary and secondary levels of education. Parents have the right to appeal to the provincial director of the Ministry of Education and Culture if they consider that the admission criteria have not been correctly applied in the case of their child(ren). Such an appeal must be processed in a timely fashion, so as to guarantee satisfactory schooling for the child.
The Decree of 18 December 1985 regulating admission of pupils establishes the objectives and hierarchy of education.
Parents have the right to establish private schools, and their children have the right to distance education organised by the state. Parents have freedom of choice with respect to instruction in religion and ethics.
Parents have rights and responsibilities concerning pupil guidance and assessment and the procedures for appeal in cases of sanctions.
However, the law actually assigns parents a relatively minor role.
The Autonomous Communities in Spain have special language provisions depending on the status of each Community. The Basque Country, for example, provides education in three languages, whereas Catalonia only offers one. These provisions naturally have a direct impact on the choices available to parents.

2. Collective rights

Parents are represented at national level by confederations within the main consultative council on compulsory education, the *Consejo Escolar del Estado*. Parents thus have direct access to all political discussions and innovations implemented at national level. The law also provides for mechanisms ensuring participation at all levels of public administration.

The 17 Autonomous Communities' gradual progress towards full autonomy has entailed the transfer of decision-making processes to bodies specific to these Communities which may then develop local arrangements, in particular as regards parents' participation.

Legislation

Parents' participation is enshrined as a principle and is an integral part of the framework law of 1985 setting out the general structures of the education system as developed under the democratic regime.

1978: The Constitution (Article 27.7) stipulates that parents can take part in the supervision and management of schools supported by public funds.

1985: The LODE (law on the right to education) lays the foundations for the current education system and regulates participation by parents at all levels of the system. Articles 3 and 8 specify the rights and obligations of parents.

1986: Royal Decree No 1533 regulates the parents' associations established in public and private schools.

1988: Decree No 1543 sets out the responsibilities of parents in the application of the LODE and its procedures. Parents' rights are set out within the framework of their children's rights.

1990: The LOGSE (law on the general organisation of the education system) provides for a global reform of the system to be completed by the year 2000. Objectives include the democratisation of education, a common core curriculum at secondary level, and increased autonomy for schools.

1995: The LOPEG (law on the participation, evaluation and administration of schools) provides that parents may participate in the running of schools through their associations. The representation of parents in the *Consejo Escolar del centro* is the same as that of teachers; parents' representatives must number at least one third of the Council's members.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
Central State	*Consejo Escolar del Estado* (National School Council)	- number: minority (12 parent representatives out of 80 members) - term: mandate of half of members renewed every 2 years	On proposal of the two national confederations of representative parents' associations; Work in committees; opinions given just before that of the State Council on the constitutionality of texts.	- consults on all education issues; publishes an assessment of the education system each year.	
Intermediate Autonomous Communities	*Consejo Escolar de la Comunidad Autónoma* (School Council of the Autonomous Community) Exists in the Autonomous Communities which have full powers in the area of education, with the exception of Navarre.	- number: minority - term: generally mandate of half of the members renewed every 2 years	Based on the model of the *Consejo Escolar del Estado* with some modifications.	- consultation	
Province	*Consejo Escolar provincial* Provincial School Council (In some provinces, however, these have not yet been constituted.)	- number: minority - term: generally mandate of half of the members is renewed every 2 years			
Municipality (*Ayuntamientos*)	*Consejo Escolar municipal* (Municipal School Council) Few municipalities have such councils.	- number: minority - term: generally mandate of half of the members is renewed every 2 years	Based on the model of the *Consejo Escolar del Estado* with some modifications.	- consultation	

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
Schools public	*Consejo Escolar del centro* (School Council)	- number: varies according to the status and level of the school (the number of parents' representatives plus the number of pupils' representatives must not be less than one third of the members of the council) - term: mandate of half of the members renewed every 2 years	Elected by peers according to procedures specified in school regulations; meets at least once per term.	- consultation	- decisions to: . develop, approve and assess the educational project and general curriculum of the school; . admit pupils; . approve the draft budget of the school; . determine and enforce major disciplinary sanctions; . approve the internal rules of procedure; . approve and evaluate additional school activities; . work together with other schools, bodies and organisations; . analyse and evaluate the general operation of the school. - **decisions (Type D)** to: . elect (or dismiss) the school head from among candidate teachers.
private grant-aided	*Consejo Escolar del centro* (School Council)	- number: joint representation (4 parents' representatives equal in number to that of teachers' representatives out of 15 members) - term: mandate of half of the members renewed every 2 years	Elected by peers as provided in school regulations.	- consultation	- **decisions (Type D)**: in addition to the usual duties of the School Council, determine selection criteria and issue opinions on the recruitment and dismissal of teaching staff. Selection itself is carried out by the *titular* (person or body responsible for school administration) and the school head.

Associations

Under the 1985 Act (Articles 3 to 8), parents have the right of association and the right to use school facilities and buildings for their activities.
Every school has at least one parents' association.
Two national confederations represent parents' associations:
- CONCAPA *(Confederación Católica Nacional de Padres de Familia y de Padres de Alumnos)* for associations in Catholic education;
- CEAPA *(Confederación Española de Asociaciones de Padres de Alumnos)* for secular associations.

Both confederations receive state grants and are involved in various activities, including representation, lobbying, publications, provision of information and training.

Training

No public training programmes are offered.
A 1994 ministerial report recognises the difficulty of providing public training for all parents. In some cases, the state provides help to finance training programmes for parents so that they can become involved in their children's education.
The two national confederations of parents' associations receive grants and have a training department *(la Escuela de Padres y Madres)*.

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FRANCE

Structure of education

Education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16.
Traditionally centralised, France's education system underwent significant decentralisation in 1982 and 1983 which profoundly changed the respective powers of the state administration and of local and regional authorities. The state continues to define educational guidelines and curricula, maintaining its responsibility for recruiting, training and managing staff. The state determines school statutes and operating rules, assigning the necessary teaching and administrative staff.
Local and regional authorities are each responsible for one level of education – municipalities (pre-school and primary), *départements (collèges)* and regions *(lycées)*. They are involved in developing the preliminary programmes of education and capital investment and play an important role in the day-to-day running of schools.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Parents are free to enrol their children in public or private schools.
In the public sector, parents must enrol their children in the school serving the district where they reside, although sometimes exceptions are made enabling parents to **choose the school**. Requests for permission to enrol pupils in a school outside their immediate district are generally grounded in parents' wish to have their child learn a different foreign language than that on offer at the local *collège* or to enrol their child in a special type of school – with European sections, music classes with flexible hours, etc. The principles are the same when, at the end of *collège*, it comes time to enrol in a general or technological upper secondary school *(lycée)*.
Parents may approach a teacher or school head directly and may appeal to a higher authority against decisions taken by the *Conseil de classe* (class council) in relation to their child's direction of study or need to repeat the year.

2. Collective rights

Parents may participate at all administrative levels (national, *département*, regional and school) and at all levels of education (pre-primary, primary and secondary).
Their role is more an advisory than a decision-making one, although parents are increasingly involved in decisions, in particular as regards their participation in the different councils to which parents can elect representatives.
A civil service circular of 1982 provides for official certificates of absence for parents who have to sit on a *Conseil de classe* or *Conseil d'administration* (class council or governing board), as long as their absence does not interfere with the normal operation of the firm or department in which they are employed.

Legislation

1932: First Circular on parent participation is issued.

1945: *Conseils de gestion d'École* (school management committees) are created, but do not come into their own until after 1968.

During the 1970s:
The first *Conseils d'administration* (governing boards) are established in *collèges* and *lycées.*

1977: The Haby reform assigns relatively restricted roles to parents in schools.

1983: *Conseils académiques et départementaux de l'Éducation nationale* (Education councils at *académie* and *département* level) are established.

1985: Decree No 85-924 of 30 August 1985 regulates procedures for the election of parents to *Conseils de gestion* (management committees).

1985: The role of parents in school as partners in education is defined in Circular No 85-246 of 11 July 1985.

1986: Circular No 86-256 of 9 September 1986 regulates the existence and activities of parents' associations.

1989: A framework law defines the role of parents as full members of the educational community.

1990-91: Decree No 90-978 of 6 September 1990, amended by Decree No 91-383 of 22 April 1991, redefines the role of parents in the *Conseils.*

1994: The *Nouveau Contrat pour l'École* (new school contract) strengthens and facilitates parental participation. The workings of the *Conseils départementaux de l'Éducation nationale* and the *Conseils académiques de l'Éducation nationale* are improved. In this framework, parents are more involved in the decisions taken.
Times and dates for meetings are to be chosen so as to facilitate parents' participation.

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Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	*Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation* – CSE (Education Council)	- number: minority (12 parent representatives, 9 from state schools and 3 from non-state schools, out of 95 members) - term: 3 years	Nominated by recognised parents' associations; proportional representation based on results of elections to the *conseils d'administration* and *conseils de l'école*; voting rights.	- consultation	
Intermediate Regional	*Conseil académique de l'Éducation nationale* (CAEN) (for *lycées* and *collèges*)	- number: minority (8 parent representatives out of 72 members) - term: 3 years	Representation of parents' associations based on votes in schools.	- consultation (on regulations of *lycées* and *collèges*, in particular, and a role in settling disputes and determining sanctions for secondary level staff with the possibility of appeal to a higher council). Since 1991, this body's scope has been widened to include higher education.	
	Conseil académique de la vie lycéenne (Council of *lycées* at *académie* level)	- number: variable – a maximum of 40 members (the *recteur* determines its exact composition; parents' representatives may attend) - term: 3 years meets at the initiative of the *recteur* at least 3 times per school year	Where parents' representatives are involved, appointed by the *recteur*, after consultation with the representative associations and organisations concerned.	- consultation: draft opinions on issues related to school life and work in *lycées* and in regional schools of *enseignement adapté*.	
Département	*Conseil départemental de l'Éducation nationale* (CDEN) (Education Council of the *département*) (in *collèges* only)	- number: minority (7 parent representatives out of 30 members) - term: 3 years	Appointed by the Prefect of the *département* upon nomination by representative parents' associations in the *département*.	- consultation (on all matters relating to the provision and distribution of schools at *département* level and schooling in general).	
Municipality	No parent participation				

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
School Primary level	*Conseil d'école* (School Council) (not a legal entity)	- number: minority, equal to number of classes - term: 1 year; meets at least once per term but can be convened at any time by the school head, the mayor, or 2/3 of its members	Election organised by school head.	- consultation on the running of the school and the school project.	- decision on: . the internal rules of the school; . organisation of additional activities; . establishment of the weekly timetable.
Secondary level	*Conseil d'administration* (governing board) (deliberating body of the EPLE – legal entity)	- number: varies according to size of school: . equal representation with teachers and administration (1/3) . minority (6 parent representatives out of 24 members) *(collèges* with under 600 pupils) . minority (7 out of 30) *(collèges* with over 600 pupils) . minority (3 out of 30) *(lycées)* - term: 1 year; meets at least once each term	Parents with a child in the school, elected by parents collectively.	- consultation on: . establishment or elimination of a section; . choice of educational tools.	- decision-making on educational, administrative and financial matters: . organisational rules of the school; . school projects; . budget; . internal rules of procedure.
	Commission d'appel (Appeals Committee for *lycées* and *collèges)*	- number: minority (3 parent representatives out of 11 members) - term: 1 year renewable	Parents' representatives appointed by the *inspecteur d'académie* from proposals of the parents' associations.	- consultation. The committee has to examine and resolve problems of divergences of opinion as between the family and the pupil, on the one hand, and the teachers on the other hand, regarding a pupil's direction of study.	

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
	Commission préparatoire à l'affectation des élèves (Preparatory Committee on Pupil Assignment)	- number: minority (2 parent representatives out of 7 members and the headteacher of the school) - term: 1 year, renewable	Parents' representatives in state education appointed, by the *inspecteur d'académie* from proposals made by the most representative parents' associations in the *département*.		- preparation of decisions: the Committee does preliminary work on the assignment of pupils and submits its proposals to the *inspecteur d'académie*.
	Commission permanente des collèges et lycées (Standing Committee on *collèges* and *lycées*)	- number: minority (7 parent representatives out of 17 members, 4 for the *collège* and 3 for the *lycée*) - term: 1 year	Parents' representatives are elected by and from members of the *conseil d'administration*.		- preparation of decisions: supports the work of the *Conseil d'administration* without substituting for it.
	Conseil de classe (Class Council) (not found in primary schools)	- number: minority (2 parents out of a variable total number, approximately 20) - term: 1 year; meets at least 3 times a year	Parents of pupils in the class, chosen by the school head from a list provided by the parents' associations.	- opinion on educational issues relevant to the class; - at the end of each year, the *Conseil de classe* takes a position on pupils' future direction of study.	

Associations

Four parents' associations are recognised by the Minister for Education.
- *Fédération des conseils de parents d'élèves des écoles publiques*, FCPE (Federation of Parents' Councils in Public Schools),
- *Fédération nationale des associations de parents d'élèves de l'enseignement public*, FNAP (Federation of National Parents' Associations in Public Education),
- *Union nationale des associations autonomes des parents d'élèves*, UNAAPE (National Union of Independent Parents' Associations) and
- *Fédération des parents d'élèves de l'enseignement public*, PEEP (Parents' Federation in Public Education).

Other associations are also recognised by the Ministry: *Fédération familiale nationale pour l'enseignement agricole privé* (FFN), *Union des associations de parents d'élèves de l'enseignement libre* (UNAPEL) and *Fédération des associations de parents d'élèves à l'étranger* (FAPEE). Other associations and unions exist within the framework of the *académies*. Parents' associations have the task of looking after the material and moral welfare of pupils at school. In addition to matters relating to daily life within the school, parents' associations are also concerned with extra-curricular activities, working in direct contact with academic staff or the school head. The associations take part in different councils, to which parents may elect representatives.

Training

The state grants subsidies to four recognised associations of parents. Funds for investment in training are distributed proportionally on the basis of election results. The budget is entrusted to the associations which are then responsible to two authorities: the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Education. The use of grants is monitored according to a financial plan and a qualitative assessment is made.
Themes are defined according to a training plan established on the basis of mandated reforms and holiday periods (on the prevention of risk-prone behaviour among young people, for example). This training is aimed at parents who are members of the *Conseil national* and of the *Conseils départementaux*.

IRELAND

Structure of education

Education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 15.
Most schools are denominational "National Schools" which are managed by local voluntary bodies. They are funded almost exclusively by the state with a small local contribution.
Ireland as yet has no framework law on education, but in a 1995 White Paper on Education entitled "Charting our Education Future" the government states its intention to give the education system a legal foundation.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

The Irish Constitution *(Bunreacht na hÉireann*, 1937, Article 42, paragraph 1) states that parents are considered the primary educators of their children and are thereby free to provide education: at home, in a private school or in a school recognised or established by the state.
Parents have complete freedom of **choice of the school** for their children. There is no legal basis for the right of parents to choose the schools their children attend. Parents may approach any school but the majority of children attend their local school. Schools that do not have places for all applicants operate various methods of selection. Up to 1994, some secondary schools had entrance examinations.
The Department of Education's view is that schools should give priority to children in the catchment area of the school. The only obstacle to parental choice of schools would be a financial one. Some 95% of secondary schools in Ireland participate in the free education scheme but the remaining 5% are fee-paying schools.
Parents are also free to choose the stream their children will follow in secondary school.

2. Collective rights

The 1995 White Paper on Education officially confirms parents' right to be represented at each level of the education system and to be consulted. This right will be made statutory in forthcoming legislation.
Relations between family and school are strengthened by the adoption of measures aimed at creating an active partnership between parents and school.
Each school's Board of Management will be required to develop a formal policy on relations between the family and the school in coordination with parents' associations.

Legislation

1975:	Compulsory Boards of Management are established in all private grant-aided primary schools (enrolling 95% of the school population).
1985:	National Parents' Councils (NPC) are created, assuring recognition of parents at national level.
1992:	Government's Green Paper on Education announces major new reforms including: a legislative foundation for education, devolution of decision-making to regional and local levels, and maximum involvement of parents.

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1995: White Paper on Education, *Charting our Education Future*, is issued. In it, the government takes a definitive position in favour of a framework law and of official recognition of parental representation at the different levels of the education system (right of consultation).

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	National Parents' Council-Primary (NPC-P) National Parents' Council-Post-primary (NPC-PP) Non-denominational	- number: parents exclusively - term: 1 year (elections held annually)	Democratic	- consultation in the same areas as teachers' unions and school representatives; - special provision for minority interests, parents of children with special needs, parents of children in Irish speaking schools, parents of children in minority religion schools.	
	Committees within the Ministry	currently on 3/4 of committees	Parents from the Councils		
Intermediate Region	Regional Education Boards as proposed in the White Paper (The Regional Educational Boards will incorporate rationalised/ restructured Vocational Education Committees.)	- number: parity with other interest groups - term: details not yet finalised	At this early stage, procedures have not yet been put into place.	- coordination: . finding ways to involve parents in school life; . consulting parents on needs; . developing straightforward procedures for resolving conflicts not settled at local level; . providing services for pupils in special education;	
	Vocational Education Committees	- number: occasional participation by parents in the capacity of experts	Committees must include experts on education issues. In this capacity, parents sit on some Committees; election by local representatives.	- organisation and development of technical and vocational education.	
School Primary school	Boards of Management (National Schools)	- number: minority (2 parent representatives out of 6 members) - term: 3 years	Elected by parents; it is proposed in the White Paper on Education that parents will be given a statutory entitlement to representation on each school Board of Management, with voting rights; parents will serve as managers as well as representatives of parents and there will be a balance between men and women.		- decision-making on school management in matters relating to: . definition of objectives; . educational organisation; . relations with parents, . staff policy; - **decision (Type D)** on . appointment of headteacher; . budgetary policy.

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Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
	Boards of Management (multi-denominational schools)	- number: minority (2 parent representatives out of 6 members) - term: 3 years	Elected by parents.	Same mode of operation as the Boards of National Schools.	
Secondary	Boards of Management (Voluntary Schools) (optional body)	- number: minority (2 parent representatives out of 8 members) - term: 3 years	Elected by parents.	Various articles govern the Board's responsibility for school management, which remains subject to the authorisation and supervision of religious authorities.	
	Boards of Management (Community Schools)	- number: minority (2 parent representatives out of 10 members) - term: 3 years	Elected by parents; at least one mother.		- school management.

Associations

The White Paper on Education (1995) proposed instituting a statutory requirement that Boards of Management facilitate parents to form an association within each school. The objectives of such associations must concur with those of the school.

In Ireland, a distinction must be made between:

- associations of parents at school level, which we refer to here;
- representatives of parents within school Boards of Management;
- representatives of parents within national associations of parents where they are grouped under various headings based on the type of school;
- National Parents' Councils at primary and secondary level, which receive state funding.

The interests of a school as perceived by the Board of Management may sometimes clash with those considered important by an association of parents. Coordination of parents' interests is vital.

An experiment was carried out to formalise dialogue with teachers within the Community and Comprehensive Schools, at the initiative of the CAPPS (national federation of parents of pupils in these schools). The results have been encouraging. An agreement between the CAPPS and the powerful teachers' unions has been signed, facilitating the establishment of joint parent/teacher committees and requiring provision of information to their respective associations (Agreement between CAPPS and Post-Primary Teachers' Unions on parent/teacher liaison at local school level, June 1994).

Training

There is a certain amount of training, funded by the state and partly by the European Union for parents involved in parental organisations and for parents serving on Boards of Management.

Training is, in theory, the province of the National Parents Councils (NPC), although a general lack of training for staff and parents concerning relations between parents and the school has been observed. However, several initiatives have been taken at national level:

- a programme financed by the Department and organised by the NPC, involving information documents and the organisation of training sessions for Board Members and trainers;
- the Parents in Partnership Programme, established to provide training and create support services and a resource centre (financed by the European Union under the FORCE Programme).

Other local initiatives have also been developed.

The Home-School Links Programme is a government initiative aimed at disdadvantaged socio-economic groups, with the objective of involving parents in their children's education and encouraging them to participate in the various available mechanisms for participation. A positive evaluation has led the government to extend and expand this programme.

ITALY

Structure of education

Education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 14.
Three types of education – public, private and home-based – are available. The vast majority of children attend public schools. Private schools and education at home are very much in the minority.
The school system is fairly centralised. The Ministry of Education determines curricula and timetables; appoints and manages teachers, school heads and supervisory staff; handles changes of assignment and *Maturità* examinations; distributes financial resources; organises retraining and oversees the inspection service.
Given the impossibility of managing all of these responsibilities effectively, the Ministry delegates some tasks to the Provincial Directorate of Education *(Provveditorato agli studi)*, which is an intermediate administrative body operating at provincial level. In addition to the delegated functions, Provincial Directors of Education *(Provveditore agli studi)* are in charge of managing permanent and supply staff, distributing operating funds to schools and monitoring their use, as well as supervising school activities.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Parents are responsible for their children's education, in particular during the period of compulsory attendance (ages 6 to 14).
Under the Italian Constitution of 1948 (Articles 30 and 33), parents have complete freedom of choice concerning education. They may choose to educate their children in public or private schools or at home.
While there is complete freedom of choice between state and non-state school, the **choice from among different state schools** is limited when the number of available places is limited. As a general rule, the individual school and the school administration set the criteria for enrolment, giving preference to the proximity of the pupil's home to the school. At primary and intermediate level, the choice of school is dictated by the catchment area, which determines the location of schools in relation to the demographic characteristics of each area.
The possibility of lodging an appeal against decisions of the public administration is always available (according to Article 113 of the Constitution). For this reason, upon refusal of admission on the part of a school, a parent (or a pupil of full legal age) can present an appeal against the decision both to the administrative authorities responsible for education and to the administrative judge.
The law gives parents and pupils the right to information on curricula and teaching methods.

2. Collective rights

Parents have a legally sanctioned role, especially in an advisory capacity, at district, provincial, school and class level.

Legislation

1974: The *decreti delegati* define structures for parental participation at local and intermediate level.

1993: Law No 537 of 24 December 1993, passed at the end of September 1994, increases the autonomy of schools and expands the role of parents. The implementation of this law was approved in March 1997, but it has not yet been brought into effect.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	No parents' participation in *Consiglio Nazionale della Pubblica Istruzione*				
Intermediate					
Region	No parents' participation				
Province	*Consiglio scolastico provinciale* (Provincial school council)	- number: minority (25% out of 12, 16 or 20 members) - term: 3 years (meeting every 3 months)	Elected by the parents of pupils enrolled in state and non-state schools of the Province.	- consultation	- decision-making (in some cases) concerning services related to school operations.
District	*Consiglio scolastico distrettuale* (District Council)	- number: minority (7 parent representatives out of 44 members) - term: 3 years	Elected by the parents of pupils enrolled in state and non-state schools in the district.	- consultation and planning	- implementation: . preparation of extra-curricular, sporting, cultural and social activities; . educational and psychological assistance; . educational and vocational guidance.
School	*Consiglio di circolo* (School Council at primary level)	- number: minority (depending on school size: 6 to 8 parent representatives out of 14 to 19 members) - term: 3 years	Elected by the parents of the pupils of the school.	- same powers as *Consiglio di istituto* at secondary level.	- approval of budget proposed by the *Giunta esecutiva*.
	Consiglio di istituto (School Council for each secondary school)	- number: minority (depending on school size: 6-8 parent representatives out of 14-19 members) - term: 3 years	Elected by the parents of the pupils of the school.	- consultation on: . organisation of school time; . school's educational functions; . disciplinary sanctions; . budget. Sends a report on the functioning of the school (its activities and results) to the school administration for the Province.	- approval of budget submitted by the *Giunta esecutiva*.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
	Giunta esecutiva (Executive Committee)	- number: minority (2 parent representatives out of 5 members) - term: 3 years	Chosen from among the parents on the School Council.	- preparing for School Councils.	
Class	*Consiglio di interclasse* (Inter-class council at primary level)	- number: minority, joint representation - term: one year	One parent elected per class.	- same powers as *Consiglio di classe* at secondary level.	
	Consiglio di classe (Class council, one for each class at secondary level)	- number: minority, 4 or 2 parent representatives (4 at lower secondary level, 2 at upper secondary level) alongside the total number of teachers of the class - term: 1 year (meeting once a month)	Elected by the parents of the pupils of the school.	- consultation on educational experiments, educational activities, textbooks (no powers when the Council deals with pupil assessment).	

Associations

Italy has a large number of parents' associations.
The *decreti delegati* allow parents' associations, without making them compulsory.
In general, parents' associations have been established spontaneously.

Training

Training for parents is practically non-existent. Only a few parents' associations (as for example, the FAES – *Famiglia e Scuola* and the AGE – *Associazione Genitori)* provide training to parents on a systematic and ongoing basis.
Despite the existence of a structure for the in-service training of teachers, there would appear to be no coordinated training programme for parents or teachers concerning participation or partnership between the family and the school.

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LUXEMBOURG

Structure of education

Education is compulsory between the ages of 4 and 15 (including two years of pre-school education).
There is no strict separation of Church and State, and religious education still has an important place in state education.
The Law of 5 August 1993 extends compulsory schooling to include the pre-school stage.
In accordance with the Grand-Ducal regulation of 2 February 1992, *Kindergarten* attendance is compulsory for children aged 4.
School networks include:
– State (public) schools: organisation is centralised (over 90% enrolment).
– private schools:
. denominational schools: if they are state-aided, these schools can have the same status as public schools as concerns parent participation and curricula.
. Waldorf schools: free (non-state) public schools; parents pay fees based on their income; grant-aided by the state only at pre-school and primary levels (1986).
. international schools: the European School and other international schools outside the national education system and outside its administration and supervision.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Parents may enrol their children in public schools or private schools.
In the public sector, parents have no **choice of school**; children must attend the school closest to home at pre-school and primary level. Pupils apply for admission to the secondary or technical secondary school of their choice. However, a system of compensation which governs the numbers admitted and sets selection criteria makes allowances for geographical proximity and takes into account family relationships with pupils already enrolled in a school.
Teachers are required to organise consultations with parents amounting to 30 minutes per week (Grand-Ducal regulation of 3 May 1989).
Parents may appeal to the inspector of primary education in the event that their child is required to repeat a year.

2. Collective rights

Parents are represented on different participation bodies at national, communal and school level.

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Legislation

1912: The *Commission d'instruction* (Education Committee) and the *Commission scolaire* (School Council) are created.

1963: Creation of the *Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation nationale* (Ministerial Regulation of 2 April 1963). This Ministerial Regulation was replaced by that of 20 December 1974 which has subsequently been amended in 1975 and in 1981.

1973: Introduction of *Conseils d'éducation* (Education Councils) in general secondary schools (Grand-Ducal Regulation of 10 July 1973).

1991: This regulation was repealed and replaced in 1991 by a new Grand-Ducal Regulation extending the introduction of such councils to technical *lycées* (Grand-Ducal Regulation of 23 May 1991).

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	*Conseil supérieur de l'Education nationale* (National Education Council)	- number: minority (4 parents out of 42 members) - term: 2 years	Appointed by the Minister.	- consultation	
	Commission d'instruction (Education Committee) at primary level	- number: minority (although the law does not provide for parents' representatives, in recent years the Ministry of Education has appointed one representative out of 10 members) - term: 4 years	Appointed by the Ministry of Education (on a voluntary basis).	- opinion on all matters relating to primary education.	- approval of textbooks.
Intermediate Communes	*Commission scolaire* (School Committee) at pre-school and primary level	- number: minority (in general 5 or 7 members for each commune, depending on the number of inhabitants, of which 3 to 5 lay members, including at least one father and one mother) - term: 6 years	Appointed by the Communal Council.	- consultation - problems related to school organisation.	- monitors implementation of the law on compulsory schooling (regular school attendance, combating truancy); - maintenance of school buildings.
School Secondary schools	*Conseil d'Education* (Education Council)	- number: minority (2 parent representatives out of 9 members) - term: 2 years	Elected	- direct involvement in the day-to-day management of the school; - development of school projects.	

Associations

Local parents' associations have been set up for the parents of primary and post-primary education pupils. Two corresponding federations also exist: one brings together local primary level associations and the other is for local post-primary associations.

Training

No training in parent-teacher relations is provided.

NETHERLANDS

Structure of education

Education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16.
Two main school networks coexist: the public and private (denominational or secular). Both networks are fully financed by the public authorities.
The state requires grant-aided private establishments to provide the same opportunities for participation as public schools.
The state's role is mainly supervisory. The state is responsible for curriculum and examinations, while the communes manage human and financial resources. Each school has a Participation Council *(Medezeggenschapsraad)* made up of parents, pupils (only in secondary education) teachers and other staff, and it has a great deal of autonomy in didactic matters (content and methods of education).

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend compulsory education (Article 245 of the Civil Code).
The freedom of education guaranteed by Article 23 of the Constitution entails the right of each natural or legal person to create and organise a private establishment, without prior approval of public authorities. Parents may thus found a school, although the standards demanded for setting up schools have been raised to the point that this right has almost lapsed.
Parents have free **choice of schools**. Children are authorised to change from one denominational network to another. In public education they are, however, required to attend a primary school within their district. The parents have the right to appeal if their child is not admitted. The choice of school in secondary education is up to the parents, but the decision on admission depends on the school board.
Decisions as to the direction of a pupil's studies are generally taken by the parents.
Teachers are required by law to maintain relations with parents as part of their normal teaching tasks. The relevant authority may ask parents to give assistance to the school, under the authority and responsibility of the staff and head, in the framework of occasional activities *(Basisonderwijs*, Article 27).
If problems arise, there are various internal and external procedures for registering complaints, although there is no framework law.
The government is planning to publish a "Parents' Charter" detailing the rights and responsibilities of the various parties involved in education.

2. Collective rights

The Netherlands has a long history of encouraging parental involvement, in full compliance with the constitutional principle of freedom of education.
Participation by parents is a tradition in the Dutch school system. However, although parents are very much involved, they have little influence on the system. At national level, they are represented only very indirectly through ideologically-based federations.
At the level of the commune, their participation in the work of the relevant authorities is minor.
A 1992 law requires each commune to create a *Medezeggenschapsraad*, a compulsory forum for teachers, parents and pupils, and explicitly defines each party's rights, i.e. those of the school and the parents.

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Legislation

1981: The *Medezeggenschapsraad* was created.

1987: The 1981 law was reassessed.

1992: An Act regulates parent participation in school establishments, broadening the responsibilities of the *Medezeggenschapsraad* and increasing school autonomy *(Wet van 3/12/92, houdende medezeggenschap in het onderwijs, niet zijnde hoger onderwijs)*. This very comprehensive law establishes clear distinctions between the consultative role and right to give prior agreement of the Council as a whole and the respective powers of teachers and parents.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	*Onderwijsoverleg Primair en Voortgezet Onderwijs* – POVO (Primary and Secondary Education Consultative Committee)	Parents' organisations (4 representatives maximum)	Representation by and within ideologically-based federations encompassing various national associations of parents, teachers and authorities; each federation is represented equally.	- consultations between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and the bodies/organisations which have administrative responsibility or which are the object of educational policy, on primary and secondary education policy proposals; - ensures: - equity between the two networks; - respect for constitutional educational freedom and the consistency of decisions.	
	Various advisory committees Informal meetings at the invitation of the Minister			- opinion and consultation on most issues related to education.	
Intermediate Province Commune	No parents' participation				
School Public schools	*Medezeggenschapsraad* (Participation Council)	- number: parity (1/3 of members; number varies from 6 to18 according to the size of establishment) - term: defined in internal regulations	Elected by and among parents of pupils; individual nomination or by an organisation.	- opinion, consultation on all issues concerning the school; - clear distinctions between powers of the entire Council and those of teachers or parents; - essential cooperation body for the competent authority; - may challenge the authority, which is required to respond in writing within 3 months.	- decision-making on all issues concerning the school.

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Associations

Four main national associations represent parents and their local associations and councils. These four associations reflect the ideological divisions of Dutch society.

NKO:	*Nederlandse Katholieke Oudervereniging* (association of Catholic parents of the Netherlands) for Catholic education.
Ouders en COO:	*Vereniging voor Ouders Christelijk Onderwijs en Opvoeding* for Protestant education, an independent national association. Membership for participation councils, local parent councils and individual parents.
VOO:	*Vereniging voor Openbaar Onderwijs* (association for public education) for the public network, a federation organised at local, provincial and national level. The number of members has been declining over the past 15 years.
LOBO:	*Landelijke Oudervereniging voor Bijzonder Onderwijs op algemene grondslag* (national association of parents in private education on a general basis) a secular federation with a simpler structure than that of the major federations.

A few other minority organisations also exist.

Studies have revealed an over-representation of parents from the middle and upper social levels.

Training

In contrast to many countries, the Netherlands has legislation explicitly recognising the need to train staff and parents to fulfil their roles within the *Medezeggenschapsraad (Wet Medezeggenschap Onderwijs*, Article 33).

AUSTRIA

Structure of education

Education is compulsory from age 6 to age 15 (from the first to the ninth school year).
The Austrian education system is in its essentials organised uniformly throughout the federation. Executive power is vested in the *Bund* and the *Länder*. The highest authority, at executive level, is the Federal Minister for Education and Cultural Affairs. In recent years, individual schools have acquired a considerable degree of autonomy.
Amendments to the *Schulorganisationsgesetz* (School Organisation Act) have been of particular significance for school policy since 1993. These introduced the concept of school autonomy *(Schulautonomie)*, making it possible for schools to develop their own curricula within centrally prescribed guidelines. All-day schools have also been introduced into the mainstream school system. Integrated education bringing disabled and able-bodied children together has been available in the *Volksschulen* since 1993 and in the *Hauptschulen* and *Allgemeinbildenden höheren Schulen* since 1997.
Most schools are public. Private grant-aided and independent education also exist.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Children residing in Austria are required to attend either a public school or a private school with equivalent status throughout the period of compulsory education. Religion is a compulsory subject in Austrian schools. All pupils who belong to an officially recognised church or religious group are required to receive religious instruction in their respective religion. However, it is possible to request exemption at the beginning of each school year.
Parents also have the right to educate their children at home or in a non-recognised private school. In such cases, there are comparable end-of-year examinations to test whether this is equivalent to public education.
The 1985 Compulsory Education Act *(Gesetz zur Schulpflicht)* gives parents **freedom of choice of school** for their children. This law was changed in 1993 and 1996 by amendments to the School Organisation Act which made it possible, following trials in pilot schemes, for disabled children to be integrated into mainstream classes in the *Volksschule*, the *Hauptschule* and the *Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule*.
Any individual or association may found a private school but must give the responsible *Landesschulrat* at least three months advance notice of their intention to do so. If permission is not refused within two months, the school is regarded as approved.
Parents and teachers can meet either individually or for group discussions of topics related to education, pupils' progress, educational guidance and vocational options, health and safety at school and issues concerning children with special educational needs.
In the first school year of all school types (at the beginning of each school year in *Allgemeinbildende Pflichtschulen)*, teachers' meetings with parents are compulsory and must also be held at other times if one third of the pupils' parents request such a meeting. At the beginning of each school year and, if necessary, or if one third of all parents in a given class so request, meetings of the *Klassenforum* (class forum) have to be convened in *Volksschulen*, *Hauptschulen* and *Sonderschulen*.
Pupils, or their parents, have a right of appeal if, for example, a child is not promoted to the next class, does not receive a certificate of completion of education, or if admission to a school is refused, or the child is expelled.

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2. Collective rights

The law gives parents the right to be represented at all levels of the education system. Parents have the right to be heard and the right to joint decision-making which, depending on the type of school, is exercised in the *Schulforum* (school forum) or in the *Schulgemeinschaftsausschuß* (school committee) depending on the type of school. The right to consultation applies to all important issues relating to teaching and education as well as to the school's management of its delegated budget. The right of joint decision-making is exercised in particular in matters involving the curricula to be drawn up by schools in the context of school autonomy and school events of several days' duration.

Legislation

1962: Membership and responsibilities of the *Kollegium der Landes- und Bezirkschulräte (B-VG, Art. 81a-81b; Bundesschulaufsichtsgesetz)* were established.

1974: School committees *(Schulgemeinschaftsausschüsse)* were introduced under the School Organisation Act.

1986: Membership and responsibilities of the class council *(Klassenforum)* and school council *(Schulforum)* were established under the School Organisation Act.

1993: Under the *Schulorganisationsgesetz* and the *Schulunterrichtsgesetz*, introduction of:
- the concept of school autonomy;
- all-day forms of schooling in mainstream education;
- the possibility for children with disabilities to receive integrated education in mainstream classes in the *Volksschule* (social integration) at the request of their parents;
- the right of parents of children with disabilities to be heard in the proceedings to determine the special educational provision to be made for them.

1996: Extension to the *Hauptschule* and the lower level of the *Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* of the concept of the social integration of children with disabilities *(Schulorganisationsgesetz* and *Schulunterrichtsgesetz)*.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National Federal State	*Schulreformkommission* (School Reform Committee)	- number: minority – (6 representatives of parents' and family organisations out of 44 members) - term: standing committee: mandate of individual members depends on their mandate in their individual organisations. The Committee is convened when necessary.	Members are appointed by the groups represented in the School Reform Committees.	- consultation with the Federal Minister in all areas of education.	
	Elternbeirat beim Bundesministerium für Unterricht und kulturelle Angelegenheiten (Parents' Council)	- number: exclusively parents (18); teachers and pupil representatives can be invited to participate as observers - term: standing committee; mandate of individual members depends on their mandate in their individual organisations; 5 meetings per school year	Representatives from 7 federal associations of parents' and family organisations.	- consultation with the Federal Minister - gives opinions of major importance to decision-makers: . advises on teaching and educational issues; . submits opinions on proposed legislation; . submits proposals; . presents their wishes and complaints.	
Intermediate *Länder*	*Kollegien der Landeschulräte* (Collegiate assembly of federal authorities at the *Länder* level)	- number: parity (number of parents at least equal to that of teachers); number varies according to *Land* - term: varies according to *Land*	Appointed by the local parliament (*Landtag* = legislative body of the *Land*); voting members appointed in proportion to political representation in the *Landtag*.	- propose appointments for teachers and head teachers in the schools of the *Bund*; - submit opinions on draft laws and decrees.	**Decision-making (Type D):** - issuing of decrees and general instructions; - appointment of office bearers (e.g. committee chairman and members). Representatives of teachers and parents both have voting rights.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
District (*Bezirk*)	*Kollegien der Bezirksschulräte* (Collegiate assembly of federal authorities at district level)	- number: parity (number of parents at least equal to that of teachers); number varies according to *Land* - term: varies according to *Land*	Appointed by the *Land* and the municipalities in the *Bezirk*; voting members appointed in proportion to political representation at *Bezirk* level.	- make proposals for appointment of teachers and heads in *Länder* schools; - give opinion on draft legislation.	**Decision (Type D)**: - approval of decrees and general directives; - appointment of office bearers (e.g. chairmen and members of committees). Representatives of teachers and parents both have voting rights.
School *Allgemeinbildende Pflichtschulen* (general compulsory schools)	*Schulforum* (School Council)	- number: parity, one parent representative per class plus all the class teachers - term: standing committee; teachers' mandate corresponds to their period as class teacher; parents' mandate: 4 years; meets at least once each school year	School head has no voting rights, but has casting vote in the case of equality of votes in matters decided by a simple majority; a 2/3 majority of both parents and teachers is required in the *Schulforum* for school autonomy decisions.	As in *Klassenforum* (see below): Class teachers and parents serve in an advisory capacity.	As in *Klassenforum*, (see below): Additional decision-making powers on curricular decisions falling under school autonomy. Class teachers and parents have voting rights.
Class	*Klassenforum* (Class Council)	- number: majority (one parent per pupil and the class teacher) - term: 4 school years; the *Klassenforum* meets at least once each school year	Direct election of one parents' representative to the *Schulforum* by parents of the first class in each school type. Simple majority vote; 2/3 majority required for decisions in the context of school autonomy. Conflicts of opinion between parents and teachers, as well as issues common to several classes, are referred to the *Schulforum*. Parents' associations have the right to nominate candidates for election as parents' representatives.	- consultation on e.g. . important teaching and education issues; . use of financial resources.	Decision-making on: - school events of several days' duration; - school guidance and health events; - school time regulations made under school autonomy powers.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
Polytechnische Lehrgänge, mittlere und höhere Schulen, Berufsschulen					
School	*Schulgemeinschaftsausschuß* (School Committee)	- number: parity of representation of teachers, parents and pupils (3 each), chaired by the school head - term: standing committee; mandate of parents' representatives depends on their mandate in the parents' association; teachers: 2 years; pupils: 1 year; meets at least twice each school year	Representatives elected by their respective groups; parents' associations are entitled to send representatives. School head has no voting rights, but has casting vote in the case of a tie in simple majority decisions; a 2/3 majority of parents, pupils and teachers is required in the *Schulgemeinschaftsausschuß* for decisions affecting school autonomy.	As in the *Schulforum*: representatives of parents, pupils and teachers serve in an advisory capacity.	As in the *Schulforum*: representatives of teachers, pupils and teachers serve in a decision-making capacity.

Associations

There are parents' associations in most schools. Approval from the school administrative authorities is not required, as they are self-governing in accordance with the *Vereinsgesetz* (Law on Associations). Membership is voluntary and usually involves a membership contribution. There are overarching associations at *Land* and federal level.

Representatives of these organisations can participate, on a consultative basis, in discussions on education issues with school authorities and the Ministry.

The School Education Act requires school heads to give active encouragement to the creation of parents' associations and to support their activities.

Official representatives of the parents' association can communicate their suggestions, wishes and complaints to the school head and class teachers. School heads must examine the issues brought forward by the parents' association and discuss them with its representatives.

Training

Opportunities for joint training in participation are available in initial and in-service teacher training programmes for teachers, parents and pupils.

Some private parents' associations offer training sessions on parent participation within the school.

PORTUGAL

Structure of education

The basic law on the education system (*Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo*, No 46/86 of 14 October 1986) established compulsory schooling from the ages of 6 to 15.
Education is structured as follows:
– a 4-year first stage of *ensino básico* (ages 6 to 10);
– a 2-year second stage of *ensino básico* (ages 10 to 12);
– a 3-year third stage of *ensino básico* (ages 12 to 15);
– non-compulsory secondary education, organised in branches;
– higher education.

Private education is not highly developed in Portugal and involves only around 7.8% of the school population (1993/94). The option of providing education at home, as described in *Decreto* No 37545 of 1949, Circular No 176 of 1952 and *Decreto-lei* No 553/80, is not often exercised.
Distance education is authorised as a satisfactory alternative to compulsory education (*Lei* No 46/46).

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Parents' freedom to choose a type of education for their children is the foundation on which a network of private and cooperative education rests (enrolling some 7.8% of the school population in 1993/94). Separation of Church and State ensures the secular nature of education.
In theory, parents are free to **choose a school** for their children. However, in practice, children are assigned to the school closest to their home or, in some cases, their parents' workplace. Older children have priority for places available in schools of first-stage *ensino básico*. In the second and third stages, pupils enrol in schools in the district where they live.

2. Collective rights

The law gives parents the right to be represented in the National Council of Education (*Conselho Nacional de Educação*), which is composed of representatives of all the parties concerned with education. Two representatives of parents' associations sit on this consultative council. The work of this body enables a large consensus on educational policy issues to be developed among all parties concerned in the social, cultural and economic spheres.
Parents are not represented at intermediate level.
At local level, parents are represented, on an experimental basis, within the School Council (*Conselho de escola*), the school administration body, and in the Education Council (*Conselho pedagógico*) and the Class Council (*Conselho de turma*). These structures, due to the experimental nature of the 1991 law, are found in only 50 schools and school districts at pre-school, *ensino básico* and secondary level. In *ensino básico* schools (second and third stages) and secondary schools not taking part in this 1991 school management experiment, the model in service since 1976 is used which provides for parental participation in several school management bodies (*Conselho pedagógico*, *Conselho consultivo* and *Conselho de turma*).
Depending on the results of the evaluation of this experiment, the government will take decisions aiming to extend the use of this new model to all non-higher education establishments in the public sector.

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Legislation

After the fall of the authoritarian regime, Portugal undertook sweeping reforms of its education system.

1976: *Decreto-lei* No 769-A/76 establishes a management model for preparatory and secondary schools. This model provides for parent participation in certain collective bodies of school administration (*Conselho pedagógico, Conselho consultivo and Conselho de turma* – an intermediary administrative body).

1977: The law No 7/77 grants parents' associations the right to cooperate with the state in children's education and to take a position on the general direction of education and youth policy and in school administration.

1979: The *Despacho Normativo* No 122/79 defines the operations and actions of parents' associations and of those responsible for education in schools, including in their tasks both management and participation in legislative initiatives in the field of education.

1980-1988: *Decreto-lei* No 53/80 establishes a Consultative Council on private and cooperative education with parental involvement. The *Decreto-lei* No 484/88 amended its name, structure and functions.

1982-1987: *Decreto-lei* No 125/82, subsequently amended by *Decreto-lei* No 31/87, establishes a National Council on Education *(Conselho National de l'Educação)* with the aim of developing a broad consensus on education policy among the social, cultural and economic parties concerned with education. Representatives appointed by the parents' associations sit on this council.

1990: *Decreto-lei* No 372/90 reflects the significant participation of parents in school life. Parents, who are normally represented in associations, are granted the right to be consulted on general education policy issues and to cooperate on matters of pedagogical orientation and school administration.

1991: *Decreto-lei* No 172/91 creates a new model for school leadership and administration, in general terms, at pre-school, *ensino básico* and secondary level. Parents are represented in the following collective administrative bodies: *Conselho de escola* (second and third stage schools of *ensino básico* and secondary education) or *Conselho de Area Escolar* (pre-school establishments and first stage schools of *ensino básico)*, the *Conselho pedagógico* and the *Conselho de turma.*

1993: *Despacho* 239/ME/93 defines the specific terms and conditions of parental participation in the management bodies of public sector schools.

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Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	*Conselho Nacional de Educação* (National Education Council)	- number: minority (2 parent representatives out of 55 members) - term: 3 years	2 representatives from the two parents' associations (CONFAP and FNAPEC).	- consultation: opinions, studies, assessment at the Minister's request or on own initiative on all education issues: 24 major areas, including democratisation and structure of the system, compulsory education, etc.	
	The CONFAP exercises its right to be heard by the Evaluation Committees on access to higher education, the inter-ministerial committee to combat child labour, the coordinating secretariat for multicultural education programmes, monitoring council for curricular reform, etc.	- number: minority - term: variable	Representatives from the CONFAP.		
	Evaluation committee to assess the effects of the 1991 law (council for the support and evaluation of the new school leadership, administration and management model)	- number: minority - term: from August 1992 to March 1996	Representatives from one parents' association (CONFAP).	- monitoring and periodic evaluation of the implementation of the new administration and management model for schools at pre-school, *ensino básico* and secondary level (submission of a final evaluation report after the first 3 years of the management model).	
Intermediate Region	No parents' participation				

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Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
School	*Conselho de escola* or *Conselho de Area Escolar* (School Council) Management body for the school or district, on trial use in 54 schools and school districts at pre-school, *ensino básico* and secondary level.	- number: minority (3 parents out of 14 members at primary level and 2 out of 18 at secondary level) - term: 1 year	Representatives of parents' associations and educational staff of the school or, where applicable, parents' representatives and educational staff of the school elected for this purpose.		- decision-making on: . settling differences between other school bodies; . determining whether to expel a pupil; . defining guiding principles for the school's relations with local authorities, institutions and relevant bodies in other schools. - giving approval to: . the educational project; . the annual activities plan and report, term reports; . annual draft budget and accounts; . internal regulations of the school and school district. - **decision (Type D)** on: . election of school head, extending or ending head's contract; - appointing deputy school heads.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
School	*Conselho pedagogico* (Education Council)	- number: minority (2 parent representatives out of a variable number of members) - term: 1 year	Representatives of parents' associations and educational staff of the school or, where applicable, parents' representatives and educational staff of the school elected for this purpose.	The 1991 model provides for a consultative and guidance council: - assistance to school management and administrative bodies in pedagogical and didactic matters, educational encouragement, guidance, support measures for pupils, training measures for teaching and non-teaching staff; - drafting of documents related to school life, such as school rules, educational project, activity plan. - consultation on: . the study plan, curricula, extra-curricular activities; . guidance, monitoring and assessment of pupils.	Under the 1976 model, this is a management body entitled to take decisions.
Class	*Conselho de turma* (Class Council)	- number: (minority 2 parent representatives out of a variable number of members) - term: 1 year	One parents' representative and one parent from the board of the parent associations; do not attend meetings on term assessments.	- the parent representative is also one of those responsible for education in class; - intermediate structure for school guidance.	

Associations

Laws adopted in 1977 and 1984 bestowed legal status on parents' associations, first at preparatory and secondary level, and then at primary level.
The National Confederation of Parents' Associations (CONFAP) was founded on 7 December 1985. This organisation encompasses 10 regional federations and some 750 parents' associations from the entire education system (representing public, private, mainstream and special, pre-school, *ensino básico* and secondary education).

The FNAPEC: *Federação Nacional de Associações de Pais de Alunos do Ensino Católico* (National Federation of Parents' Associations in Catholic Education).

The CONFAP: *Confederação Nacional des Associações de Pais* (National Confederation of Parents' Associations) has been a member of the European Parents' Association (EPA) since 1986.

Training

Although there is no systematic programme of training for parents or teachers concerning the relationship between family and school, the CONFAP organises 10 training activities each year (organised by each of the federations within this confederation).
Other activities are also conducted by the different federations and associations in Portugal. The Minister's role in this area is merely to provide information.

FINLAND

Structure of education

Education is compulsory between the ages of 7 and 16 (complete 9-year cycle in the *peruskoulu/grundskola* or at least 10 years of schooling).
The education system is decentralised so that the 453 municipalities have the responsibility for organising compulsory education for all children living within their areas or for ensuring that children of school age can receive comparable teaching in some other manner. Almost all *peruskoulu/grundskola* schools are municipal. Under 1% of schools are private.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child completes compulsory schooling.
They have the right to set up private schools as long as they respect certain conditions prescribed by law.
Schools must respect a family's religious beliefs.
Children have the right to be taught in their native language. This can limit the right of parents **to choose a school** for their children. Children must attend the *peruskoulu/grundskola* in the district where they reside. The district can be the area of the municipality, or part of it, defined by local decision.
Cooperation with parents is one of the statutory objectives of pre-school education in day-care centres *(päiväkoti/daghem)*.
The law provides for daily contact with parents, meetings and conferences (3 hours 15 minutes per week out of a total of 38 hours 15 minutes).

2. Collective rights

Parents' participation varies according to the level of education. Parents are active mainly in pre-school establishments, *peruskoulu/grundskola* and upper secondary education *(lukio/gymnasium)*. Parents are no longer represented in technical and vocational education where they have been replaced by representatives of the working world.
Since 1992, municipalities have had freedom to decide whether the *peruskoulu/grundskola* and *lukio/gymnasium* have a school board, or whether they are managed through the municipal administration.
In the case of school boards, participation is provided for in the 1983 legislation on the compulsory school Act and the upper secondary school. In the latter case, the general rules of the Municipal Administration Act of 1976 *(Kunnallislaki/Kommunallagen)* apply. These Acts stipulate that the school is responsible for establishing cooperation with parents to help them in their role as educators.
In practical terms, this cooperation is informal (notes, telephone conversations, meetings). Current policy aims to involve parents in the development of the school curriculum and educational projects.

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Legislation

1931: Parent participation is explicitly mentioned here for the first time although a management board had already been introduced in the first schools legislation *(Kansakoulu)* in 1866. Six of the seven or eight members of the management board had to be elected from among the parents.

1957: According to the 1957 Act on the primary school *(Kansakoululaki)*, the school had to aim at close cooperation and understanding with the home. Articles 21 and 22 stated that the primary school was to be run and supervised by a school management board *(Kansakoulun johtokunta)* chosen by the Municipal Council *(Kunnallisvaltuusto)*. On the school management board, six members had to be chosen mainly amongst the pupils' parents.

1958: The 1958 Act on the primary school *(Kansakouluasetus)* specified that at least three of the members of the board had to be parents of pupils. The tasks of the school management board were to audit teaching, enforce compulsory education, read and approve curricula, choose teachers and ensure that necessary and sufficient equipment, buildings and teaching materials were provided in the school. The school management board also prepared annual proposals for the school budget.

1968: The 1968 Act on the school system *(Koulujärjestelmälaki)* transferred the powers of the school management boards to the municipal school boards *(Koululautakunta)*. Parents were represented on a school council *(Kouluneuvosto)*, where there were five members, chosen by the Municipal Council.

1970: According to the 1970 Act on the general school *(Peruskouluasetus)*, the task of the school council was to maintain and promote cooperation between school and home, and supervise the functioning of the school.

1983: The Act on the compulsory school *(Peruskoululaki/Grundskolelagen)* brought management boards back to schools, at least three of the seven members having to be elected among parents.

1992: The Act on the compulsory school was amended to enable the municipalities to decide independently on the organisation of school management, either by establishing management boards for individual schools or for groups of schools, or by organising their management within the municipal administration.

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Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	No parents' participation				
Intermediate Province Municipality	No parents' participation				
School *Peruskoulu/ grundskola* and *lukio/gymnasium*	*Johtokunta/Direktion* (Cooperation board) optional body	- number: minority - term: 4 years	Some of the members must be elected from among the parents.	- consultation on: . development of school curriculum; . creation of a positive atmosphere at school; . enhancement of family-school relations. Significant cooperation between parents and teachers on an informal basis.	- drawing up of timetables and work plans for school; - if the municipality so decides, drawing up and determining local curriculum for the school (within the national framework).

Associations

The national parents' association *(Suomen Vanhempainliitto ry/Finlands Föräldraförbund rf)* plays a major role on an informal basis. Today, there are about 800 local parents' associations, which used to be called Home and School Associations. Their activity is voluntary and informal and aims at closer cooperation between parents and schools. These associations work for the most part at the *peruskoulugrundskola* level and among other things raise funds for the free-time activities and study visits of the pupils.

Training

No training programme exists.

SWEDEN

Structure of education

Education is compulsory between the ages of 6/7 and 15/16 and is dispensed in the *grundskola.*
The Swedish education system is decentralised.
Although the privatisation of education has accelerated since 1992/93, 98.6% of schools are public and managed by local authorities.
Private schools, which enrol 1.9% of pupils, are grant-aided at the rate of 75% of the average cost per pupil.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

The right for parents **to choose a school** for their children is enshrined in the Education Act of 1992. Since 1992, parents of children going through compulsory schooling have the right to choose, within reasonable economic and organisational limits, which school their children shall attend. Parents and pupils have the freedom to choose between different municipal schools or an approved independent school.
The pupil's home municipality is obliged to pay for the pupil's schooling if the pupil chooses to attend an independent school approved for providing compulsory education. On the other hand, the municipality is not obliged to pay school transport for pupils – children who live far away from school may be provided with transport paid for by the municipality – if parents choose a school that is further away from the pupil's home.
The right to choose does not guarantee that there will be places available in the school that is chosen. The school may be completely full, and there are several other restrictions: pupils living close to a school have priority there; choices made by the pupils and parents must not create major economic or organisational problems for the municipality.
Parents and pupils have the right to appeal to the Board of Appeal for the school system (located in the National Agency for Education) to get a place at a school of their choice.
Parents have the right to choose the type of education (public or private) in which the child is enrolled.
Teachers must inform parents of their children's marks, activities and progress.
In the final analysis, parents have sole responsibility for their children.

2. Collective rights

At national level, the parent's association known as *Hem och Skola* (Home and School) serves as a consultative body to the government.
Through these associations, parents participate in discussions on education and are consulted at local level.
At municipal or school level, there are different kinds of councils in which parents are represented. However, most of these councils are new and have been active for only a few years, five at the most. Nearly half of all municipalities have regulated the forms of parents' participation, but it is not regulated at national level. Where the councils exist, they have different roles and different forms of organisation. Most often, the councils have an informative and consultative role. A smaller number of councils, however, have some decision-making powers, sometimes in the form of a veto on the school head's decisions. As the councils' organisation varies, they have different names, but most common is some form of *Förvaltningsråd.*

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In 1996, a government bill came into force providing that the municipalities have the right to establish local boards with parents in the majority. This is a pilot experiment which will take place over a period of five years. These local boards are not yet widespread. Within a municipality, it is possible that only certain schools, or even certain classes or working units, are covered by the local boards.
Parents form the majority on these local boards, but headteachers as well as representatives of the staff should also be members.
The municipality decides which matters are to be carried out by the local board. In general, matters that are at present within the headteacher's responsibility can be transferred to the local board, such as, for instance, the timetable, school environment and certain financial matters. Certain matters that are now within the responsibility of the municipal board of education can also be transferred to the local board. However, the municipal board of education still has the overall responsibility for the school and the headteacher will still be in charge of educational activities. A local board can never take over the teacher's responsibility on how education is to be carried out.

Legislation

1994: Parents' participation is described in the state regulated national curriculum for the compulsory school *(Läroplan för det obligatoriska skolväsendet – Lpo 94)*.

1996: Bill on pilot experiment with local boards at school *(Förordning om försöksverksamhet med lokala styrelser i skolan)*.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	*Hem och Skola*[1]	- number: varies, but exclusively parent representatives - term: varies, often 1 or 2 years	Elected from among representatives of members of local associations.	- information: consultative body to the government.	
Intermediate County	No parents' participation				
Municipality	Name of the council varies: *Förvaltningsråd* is the most common;[2] does not always exist	- number: varies - term: varies between 1 to 3 years	Elected from among representatives of each school in the municipality.	- powers vary greatly: some councils are purely advisory, others have some decision-making powers; - information, consultation.	- only a very small number of the councils have decision-making powers on: . school environment, . special events . budget.
	Local board (since 1996, not yet widespread)	-number: varies, but parent representatives are the majority - term: varies	Members are chosen by the municipal board of education on the proposal of parents, teachers and other staff. Pupils may take part in board meetings and give their opinion.	- powers vary: this council may take decisions which were previously the responsibility of the municipal board of education and may lie within the responsibilities of the head-teacher or the municipal board of education.	- the board will have decision-making powers, but boards may not, however, take over full responsibility for school or educational activities. Powers may be, for instance: . timetable . school environment . certain financial maters.
School	Name of the council varies: *Förvaltningsråd* is the most common;[2] does not always exist.	- number: varies - term: varies between 1 to 3 years	Elected from representatives of each class in the school.	- powers vary greatly, some councils are purely advisory, others have some decision-making powers; - information, consultation.	- only a small number of the councils have decision-making powers: . school environment . special events . budget.

[1] The *Hem och Skola* association is also active at municipality and school levels.
[2] Most of these councils are new and have been active for only a few years, five at the most.

Associations

Most schools have parents associations active at all levels of political life. These associations serve as information and consultative bodies between parents and schools.
At national level, the association *Hem och Skola* proposes measures to the government and participates in debates on education.
Parents often form local associations which participate as advisory bodies in decision-making at municipal level.
Parents are elected to the association. Each school generally has one or two representatives of each class in the association.
If a municipal-level association exists, it includes representatives of each school.

Training

No training specifically for parents is offered.

UNITED KINGDOM (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

Structure of education

Education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16 in England and Wales, and 4 and 16 in Northern Ireland.
Responsibility for the education system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is decentralised and is distributed among central government, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) or, in Northern Ireland, the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs), the churches, individual institutions and the teaching profession.
In England and Wales, many of the LEAs' responsibilities have been delegated to the Governing Bodies of LEA-maintained schools. Grant-maintained schools are completely independent of LEAs.
In Northern Ireland, many of the Education and Library Boards' responsibilities have similarly been delegated to the Boards of Governors of individual schools.

Unless specified, the information which follows applies to publicly funded schools.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Parents have a duty to ensure that their child receives an efficient full-time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he or she might have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
Parents may choose to educate their children at independent schools, and, in England and Wales, the Assisted Places Scheme offers some academically able children of low-income parents partial assistance with fees at participating independent schools. A small minority of parents choose to educate their children outside school.
Parents have the **right to express a preference as to which school they would like their child to attend** (Education Act 1980 and Education Reform Act 1988). If there is space in the school, the child must be admitted, but if the school is oversubscribed, admission is generally dependent on the individual school's published admission criteria. In Northern Ireland, grammar schools select children according to their academic performance. In England and Wales, a small minority of secondary schools in certain areas select children according to their academic performance.
Parents have the right to withdraw their child from sex education lessons, religious education and/or collective worship.
Parents have the right to have their child's special educational needs assessed by the LEA, (or Education and Library Board in Northern Ireland) and to have appropriate education provided.
The law requires each school to provide parents with detailed written information on the school, including a statement on the ethos and values of the school, statements about the curriculum and organisation of education and teaching methods, particulars of the school's admissions policy, and the school's policy for dealing with complaints. Parents must also be provided with an Annual Governors' Report, which must include a list of the names and status of all governors, a full financial statement, and the results of statutory assessment and public examinations.
Before a school is inspected, a meeting must be arranged between parents and the inspectors. After the inspection, all parents must be provided with a copy of the summary report.

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Parents are also entitled to a written report, at least once a year, on their child's achievements; this must include brief particulars of the pupil's progress in subjects and activities studied as part of the school curriculum, and the results of any public examinations or statutory assessments.
In England and Wales, parents have the right to vote on whether their child's school applies for grant-maintained status (that is, to opt out of LEA control). In Northern Ireland, parents have the right to vote on whether their child's school should become an integrated school (that is, a school which aims to educate Protestant and Roman Catholic children together).

2. Collective rights

Within schools, parents are represented on the Governing Body (in England and Wales) or the Board of Governors (in Northern Ireland). All parents have the right to stand for election as parent governors and to vote for a person of their choice. Within these policy-making bodies the parent governors have the same duties and responsibilities as other governors. The Governing Body (or Board of Governors in Northern Ireland) must hold an annual meeting for parents at which resolutions by individual parents may be put to the vote. If passed, a resolution must be considered by the Governing Body (or Board of Governors in Northern Ireland).
Parents are not automatically consulted during the process of decision-making on national educational issues. However, an informal practice of consultation has emerged in England and Wales, with the representation of the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations (NCPTA) within working groups concerned with the National Curriculum. There are no equivalent federations for parents in Northern Ireland.

Legislation

England and Wales:

1980: The Education Act 1980 gave parents the right to express a preference for a school for their child, and required LEAs to set up independent appeals panels to consider appeals by parents whose child had not been offered a place at their chosen school. This Act also required each school to have a separate Governing Body, and made provision for the election of parent governors. It specified the information which schools must; provide for parents. It also established the Assisted Places Scheme.

1986: The Education (No 2) Act 1986 increased the proportion of parent governors, and obliged school governors to produce an annual report for parents and to hold an annual meeting for parents.

1988: The Education Reform Act 1988 strengthened parents' rights in the area of schools admissions, by requiring schools to admit up to their capacity.

1992: The Education (Schools) Act 1992 defined parents' rights to be consulted and informed when their child's school is to be inspected.

1994: The Parent's Charter for England and Wales (updated in 1994) sets out the rights and responsibilities of individual parents in respect of their involvement in their child's education. The Parents' Charter for Northern Ireland (1992) provides similar information for parents in Northern Ireland.

In **Northern Ireland**, the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 and the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 gave parents similar rights.

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Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	No parents' participation				
Intermediate local authority	Local authority education committee or Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland	No specific representation for parents (majority of members are elected politicians)			
School	Governing Body (or Board of Governors in Northern Ireland)	- number: minority (exact number depends on type/size of school) - term: 4 years	Parent governors are elected by parents and have the same rights and duties as other governors.		- **decision (Type D):** . general decisions of school; . allocation of budget; . number of teaching and non-teaching staff, or . recruiting and selecting all staff including headteacher; - ensuring implementation of National Curriculum or Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Associations

Parents are represented in home-school associations, often known as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). In England and Wales, various federations and national associations have been formed to represent, assist and inform parents. So far, there is no statutory requirement for any of these organisations to be consulted.
The National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations (NCPTA) is the largest organisation of home-school associations in England and Wales. Its Welsh arm is known as the Parent Teacher Associations of Wales (PTAW). It participates informally in consultation with Ministers and government departments, and promotes partnerships between home, schools, Local Education Authorities and other interested bodies.
The Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) is an independent national advice centre for parents, which also acts as a lobby group on behalf of parents.
The Campaign for the Advancement of State Education (CASE) is a lobby group that aims to promote high quality state education for all, equal opportunities and parent participation.
National associations of governors include the National Association of Governors and Managers (NAGM), the National Governors' Council (NGC) and Action for Governors Information and Training (AGIT).
There are no equivalent federations for parents in Northern Ireland. The Parents' Action Group for Education is a lobby group which raises particular issues with the Minister at the relevant time.

Training

A wide range of training and support is available for all governors, including parent governors. This training is normally publicly funded and generally provided by local education authorities in England and Wales and by the Education and Library Boards and the Regional Training Unit in Northern Ireland.
In England and Wales, federations of home-school associations and national associations of governors provide information and support to individual members.

UNITED KINGDOM
(Scotland)

Structure of education

Education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16.
Some 96% of all pupils attend free coeducational state schools, which are comprehensive and non-selective. State schools are managed by the Scottish Local Authorities (SLAs). Self-governing schools (of which there are two) are administered directly by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department.
Private fee-paying schools enrol about 4% of the school population.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Parents are legally responsible for their children's education between the ages of 5 and 16. Parents may choose public or private schools or education at home (which is rare).
The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, and its amending Act of 1981, gave parents the legal right to send their children to **the school of their choice**. Under this Act, parents had the right to 'place a request' to the school of their choice, although requests could be refused on various grounds, such as added expenditure to the school (including the employment of extra staff), or on the grounds that the request would be detrimental to the continuity of the child's education or to order and discipline in that school.
Under the 1980 Act, however, provision could not be made to retain school places for possible incomers to the area. This meant that, if a school in an incoming family's catchment area happened to be full, their child(ren) would have to go to a school outside their catchment area.
Following the 1981 Act, the Parents' Charter gave parents an increasing number of rights. These include the right to choose their child's school (within the limits of places available), the right to information about education and schools in the area, and, if their income was below a certain level, the right to apply for an 'assisted place' to help them with school fees at an independent (private) school. If there were more requests for a state school than there were places, the local authority would normally give priority to those who lived nearest, or who already had brothers or sisters at the school.
One of the principal amendments of the Education (Scotland) Act 1996 is designed to help ensure that children of families moving to a new area can be guaranteed a place at a local school. It enables local authorities, in circumstances where no alternative schooling is available within walking distance, to refuse placing requests for children who live outside the catchment area, if this would deprive an incoming child of the right to be educated in a school which is nearest to them.

2. Collective rights

Legislation at national level encourages parental involvement in School Boards. In addition, national associations such as the Scottish Parent Teacher Council (SPTC) have called for parents to play a role at national level.
Parents are represented on School Boards which can be found in over 80% of schools.

Legislation

1980-81:	The Education (Scotland) Act of 1980 and its amending Act of 1981 allow parents to submit a request to enrol their children in a school other than the one recommended by the SLA.
1988:	Section 12 of the School Boards (Scotland) Act calls on School Boards to encourage the formation of a parents' association within the school.
1989:	Legislation on Self-Governing Schools allows the School Board to request the status of an autonomous school, pending agreement by a majority of parents, and to free the school from the authority of the SLA.
1991:	The Parents' Charter specifies the individual rights of parents as regards the submitting of requests, the Assisted Places Scheme, reporting and other issues.
1993:	In the SOED's Circular No 6/93 of 31 March 1993, entitled Devolved School Management: Guidelines for Schemes, the government expresses the hope that School Boards will broaden the scope of their responsibility, on budgetary issues in particular.
1996:	One of the principal amendments of the Education (Scotland) Act 1996 is designed to ensure that children of families moving to a new area can be guaranteed a place at a local school.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	No parents' participation				
Intermediate Region	No parents' participation				
School	School Board is created only if enough parents are interested; SLAs may delegate any issue they consider appropriate to the Board.	- number: majority (4 to 7 parents out of 7 to 13 members) - term: 4 years	Elected, have voting rights.	- providing information to parents; - consultation; - can request information from SLA on matters affecting the school; - involvement in (but with no powers to decide on) the selection of headteachers, deputy heads and assistant heads.	- decision-making on: . approval of the budget for teaching materials; . internal organisation; . the setting of occasional holidays during term time; . extra-curricular use of facilities.

Associations

The Scottish Parent-Teacher Council (SPTC), founded in 1948, is the national association of parents' federations and associations. It provides representation at national level and services to its members. It issues advice and opinions at national and local level, provides information and training and publishes information documents on a regular basis.
In addition, the Scottish School Board Association (SSBA), founded in 1988, informs its members, encourages them to exchange ideas and conveys their views to central government.

Training

Through School Boards, the Department has supported the introduction of a major publication and training campaign. Basic documents were sent to 21 000 members, 600 trainers were trained, 16 targeted seminars were organised and a video and television programme created.
The Scottish Parent-Teacher Council (SPTC) and the Scottish Consumer Council publish practical guides for parents describing laws on education, rights, and approaches to school management, among other topics.

ICELAND

Structure of education

Compulsory education is organised in a single structure, the *grunnskóli,* for pupils from age 6 to 16 years. Iceland's education system is essentially public. Few private schools exist.
The Icelandic Parliament, the *Althing,* is legally and politically responsible for the school system. As of 1 August 1996, the state has no longer any responsibility for providing compulsory schooling *(grunnskóli)* in cooperation with the municipalities, the whole operation of the compulsory schools having been transferred from the state to the municipalities. The state is however responsible for curriculum development, national examinations and the evaluation and supervision of schools. From August 1997, the cost of education at this level will be borne entirely by the municipalities. The state will however continue to pay for all educational materials. In accordance with an agreement between the state and the municipalities, the state will pay a certain amount annually for school buildings in the period 1997-2001.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Parents have the right to take charge of their children's education.
Concerning the right of parents **to choose a school** for their child, the principle of the geographical catchment area operates, i.e. pupils are expected to attend the school closest to their home. If parents wish their children to attend a school in some other school district, they have to make a request to the local authorities in question and ask their own local authorities to transfer funds for the children's schooling to the other school district. If the local authorities come to an agreement concerning the payment, the children can attend a school in another school district. Parents can also choose to send their children to a private school (there are very few) but in that case they must pay school fees.
They have the right to establish private schools which may be recognised and granted public funds.

2. Collective rights

Parents are represented within school councils *(Skólanefnd)* at local level and in parents' councils *(Foreldraráð)* at school level, but they have no decision-making powers.

Legislation

1974: Legislation on compulsory education gave representatives of parents rights to attend meetings with teachers. For the first time, parents had the right to form parents' associations.
1991: First legislation was passed on parents' participation within the *Skólanefnd* (27 March 1991).
1995: On 8 March 1995, the *Grunnskóli* Act defines parent participation in the *Skólanefnd* and Parents' Councils *(Foreldraráð).*

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Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	*Námsgagnastofnun* (National Centre for Educational Materials) under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Education	- number: minority (1 parent representative out of 7 members) - term: 3 years	Elected by the National Parents' Association *Heimili og Skóli* (Homes and Schools).	This Centre publishes and distributes educational materials to pupils at compulsory level. Parents have the right: - to attend meetings of the board; - to take the floor; - to make proposals on issues related to the development and publication of educational material.	
Intermediate Local municipalities	*Skólanefnd* (School Board) Compulsory level	- number: minority (1 parent representative with usually 5 politically elected members in addition to representatives of parents, teachers and headteachers who have the right to attend meetings) - term: 4 years	Groups of parents or parents' associations choose one parent; the members of the *Skólanefnd* are chosen by the municipality.	The board is in charge of educational affairs in the community in question. Parents have the right: - to attend the *Skólanefnd* meetings; - to take the floor; - to make proposals on issues related to education.	
School	*Foreldraráð* (Parents' Council)	- number: exclusively parents (3 parents); the headteacher must work with the *Foreldraráð* - term: 2 years	Chosen democratically according to a procedure established by the headteacher.	- to comment on the school action plan; - to inform parents.	- to monitor implementation of school action plan

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Associations

Most schools have a parents' association. Parents are authorised by the *Grunnskóli* Act of 1995 to create their own associations. These associations may influence decisions by participating in meetings of parents and teachers and in the meetings of the *Skólanefnd,* where their representatives have the right to make proposals.
In 1992, parents founded a national association known as *Heimili og Skóli* (Homes and Schools). Parents' associations are usually composed exclusively of parents, although they sometimes include a few teachers. Parents of pupils in each school choose a representative from within their association to participate in the *Skólanefnd* and *Foreldraráð*. Parents' associations are responsible for strengthening the existing ties between school and home.

Training

Systematic training on an ongoing basis is practically non-existent.

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LIECHTENSTEIN

Structure of education

Education is compulsory after the age of 6 for a duration of nine school years (from year 1 to year 9).
Education is essentially public. Private education also exists on a small scale.
The primary schools are run by the communities and the secondary schools are run by the state.
Responsibility for curricula and supervision is with the state. Every school has its own management.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

As soon as the children are 6 years old, they have to go to school.
Each school has its own catchment area, so the parents have no real **choice of school**.
In primary schools, the children are usually promoted every year, except where parents explicitly request otherwise.
After the fifth year of primary school and an assessment procedure, the pupils are distributed among three types of secondary school. The responsibility for an appropriate allocation of each child lies equally with parents and teacher. There is no formal assessment. If teacher and parents disagree, the final decision is taken by the national education committee *(Landesschulrat)*.

2. Collective rights

In *Kindergärten* and schools, teachers are required by law to cooperate with parents. Although the parents' direct influence on the education system is limited, they are included and represented in all educational matters and requested to communicate their point of view.
Parents' representation is ensured through various local parents' committees which are nationally represented by one national umbrella organisation.
There is a general tendency to include parents in decision-making procedures.

Legislation

1971: Cooperation between the parents and schools is made obligatory (school legislation, Article 95).

1972: Cooperation between parents and teachers is explicitly structured (legislation on structure and organisation of *Kindergärten* and all types of school). At the same time, parents are encouraged to form their own committees which in turn are represented in the national committee.

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Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	*Landesschulrat* (National Education committee) for secondary level	- number: majority (2 parent representatives out of 3 members) - term: 4 years	Politically appointed by the government (but parents' interests are always represented).		This body is the first instance of appeal as well as a decision-making body: - decision on: . allocation of pupils - **decision (Type D)** on: . promotion in case of disagreement between teachers and parents (in primary and secondary schools).
Intermediate	*Gemeindeschulrat* (community based education committee)	- number: minority (2 parent representatives out of 5 members) - term: 4 years	Politically appointed by the local community authority (but parents' interests are always represented).	- consultation	- decision on distribution of teachers/classes - **decision (Type D)**: . appointing the *Kindergarten* teachers; . right to appoint new primary teachers.
School	*Elternbeirat/Elternvereinigung* (local parents' committee)	- number: exclusive participation by parents	Self regulated	- consultation	

Associations

Parents' representation is ensured through local parents' committees in all communities and they are nationally represented by one national umbrella organisation *(Dachverband der liechtensteinischen Elternorganisationen)*, which has a consultative role.

Training

In general, no training in parent-teacher cooperation is provided but *ad hoc* training is possible.

NORWAY

Structure of education

Schooling is compulsory between the ages of 7 and 16.
Compulsory education, called *grunnskole*, consists of two stages. The first stage *(barnetrinnet)* lasts five years, taking children from 7 to 13 years old. The second stage of compulsory education *(ungdomstrinnet)* lasts four years, taking children from 14 to 16 years old. Compulsory education is coeducational and free.
Education is essentially public. Few private schools exist (approximately 5% of the total number of schools), but their number is increasing. Private schools may be grant-aided at a rate of 85%.
The state administers public education, mainly through the local authorities. The municipalities are responsible for employing teachers, running schools and securing cooperation between schools and advisory bodies in the *grunnskole*.

Rights of parents

1. Individual rights

Parents have a duty to take responsibility for their children's education. In the final analysis, only parents can take decisions concerning their child. Parents have the right to open a private school.
There is no free **choice of school**; in *grunnskole*, the general rule is that pupils attend the public school in the part of the municipality in which they live. The municipality can accept an application to go to another school. Parents have the right of appeal to governmental authorities at the regional level if the school they have chosen does not consent to enrol their child.

2. Collective rights

According to Norwegian law, it is the parents who bear the main responsibility for their children's upbringing and education. For this reason, the parents must also share responsibility for the school. They have influence both through informal contact and through the organised bodies of cooperation.
Since 1969, the law has required every school have a Parents' Council *(Foreldreråd)* of which all parents are members. The *Foreldreråd* elects a Working Party *(Foreldrerådets arbeidsutvalg* – FAU*)*. The main responsibility of the *Foreldreråd* is to promote the common interests of the parents at each school and contribute to the active participation of pupils and parents in the school community.
In every school, there must also be a school board *(Samarbeidsutvalg)* with nine members of whom two are representatives from the *Foreldrerådets arbeidsutvalg* (FAU). This committee is an advisory and coordinating body for the different parties within the school community. The Municipal Council may delegate the final authority in certain matters to the *Samarbeidsutvalg*.

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Legislation

1969: Parents' participation is governed by the *Grunnskole* Act. The objectives are expressed in section 1 of the Education Act: "*The purpose of the* grunnskole *shall be, in agreement and cooperation with the home, to help to give pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, to develop their mental and physical abilities, and to give them good general knowledge so that they may become useful and independent human beings at home and in society. The school shall promote intellectual freedom and tolerance, and strive to create good forms of cooperation between teachers and pupils and between school and home.*"

1988: A Parents' Reference Group was appointed in 1976. In 1988, this committee was given a statutory basis and transferred to the Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. Its name was changed to the National Parents' Committee for the *grunnskole* (*Foreldreutvalget for grunnskolen* – FUG).

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
National	*Foreldreutvalget for grunnskolen* (FUG) (National Committee for the *grunnskole*)	- number: exclusively parents (9 members) - term: 4 years	The Ministry of Education appoints the chairman and deputy chairman and nominates the members.	- advisory body for the Ministry; - advisory role vis-à-vis parents and the school; - promotion of positive cooperation between school and home; - stimulation of the involvement of parents in educational matters in school community.	
Intermediate County	No parents' participation				
Municipality	*Kommunale foreldreutvalg* (Municipal Parents' Council) Such councils are established (but not by law) in approx. 160 municipalities out of a total of 435.	- number: exclusively parents (5 to 10, depending on the size of the municipality) - term: 1 or 2 years		- advisory body for the Municipal Council; - coordinating body for the schools in the municipality.	
	Municipal Education Committee (several terms are used for this body)	- number: minority There is no automatic representation for parents; the *Kommunale foreldreutvalg* has to apply to the municipal authorities for this (usually 1 representative of parents from the *Kommunale foreldreutvalg* alongside representatives of various political parties);	Appointed by the Municipal Council.	The representative of parents from the *Kommunale foreldreutvalg* has the right to speak in the Municipal Education Committee.	The Municipal Education Committee is responsible for: . intake of pupils; . running schools; . giving courses in Norwegian as a second language to adults; . securing cooperation between schools and advisory bodies in the municipalities. The Municipal Education Committee is also responsible (**Type D of decision-making power**) for: . employing teachers.

Participation of parents

Level	Participation structures	Representation of parents		Powers/Role	
		Number/Term Coverage	Participants and procedures	Consultation/Information	Decision-making powers
		- term: 4 years for the Municipal Education Committee (this may not always be the case for the parent representative; it depends on the municipalities)			
School	*Samarbeidsutvalg* (school board)	- number: minority (2 parent representatives out of 9 members); - term: 1 year; a new board is appointed every school year	2 members from the *Foreldreràdets arbeidsutvalg* – FAU.	- advisory body for the head teacher in all administrative and educational questions.	The Municipal Council can delegate decision-making powers to the *Samarbeidsutvalg*.
	Foreldreràd (Parents' Council)	- number: exclusively parents (all parents are members); - term: 1 year	The council elects a Working Party (*Foreldreràdets arbeidsutvalg* – FAU). Parents of disabled pupils and parents of pupils speaking minority languages can establish subgroups as well as being ordinary members.	- advisory body for the head teacher in all administrative and educational questions; - promotes the common interests of the parents; - contributes to the active participation of pupils and parents in the school society.	
Class	*Foreldreràdets arbeidsutvalg* – FAU (Parents' Council Working Party)	- number: exclusively parents (2 parents from each class); - term: 1 year	Parents from each class elect 2 class contacts (male and female). The Working Party usually consists of the class contacts.		

Associations

A Parents' Reference Group was appointed in 1976. In 1988, this committee was put on a statutory basis and transferred to the Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. Its name was changed to the National Parents' Committee for the *grunnskole (Foreldreutvalget for grunnskolen* – FUG).

Training

No training is provided for parents, but the head of each school is responsible for giving information to the members of the school bodies about their duties, rights and tasks. In some places, the Municipal Council offers training for the parents. In some schools, the *Foreldrerådets arbeidsutvalg* (FAU) organises parents' training.

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EURYDICE

The Information Network on Education in Europe

OBJECTIVES

The role of the EURYDICE network, the information network on education in Europe, is to promote the exchange of information on education systems and on national policies in the field of education. It contributes to increasing mutual understanding and cooperation between the 15 Member States of the European Union.[1]

ORIGIN AND HISTORY

In 1976, when the Council and the Education Ministers adopted the Resolution on a first programme for cooperation in the field of education, they gave recognition to the importance, in this context, of exchanges of information and experience. It was on this basis that the EURYDICE network was set up and became operational in 1980. Ten years later, in 1990, the Council and the Ministers adopted a Resolution dealing specifically with EURYDICE and calling for a reinforcement of its services. The Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union) marked an important step forward, providing in the new Chapter 3, Article 126, for developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States. It has thus opened up for EURYDICE new projects of which the Community education programme SOCRATES, adopted on 14 March 1995, takes full account (Annex, Chapter III, Action 3, point 2). It is under this Programme that the development of EURYDICE will be assured from now on.

ORGANISATION AND ACTIVITIES

The network comprises National Units, most of which are located in the Ministries of Education. The European Unit, established by the European Commission, coordinates the network's activities, publications and services. It also promotes exchanges between the National Units to meet the information needs of national and Community policy makers. On the basis of contributions from the network, it produces basic documents and comparative analyses on topics of interest to cooperation at Community level. EURYDICE is also increasingly called upon to fulfil the role of an "Observatory", in relation to the development of the education systems and policies in the European Union. Through the dissemination of its publications, the EURYDICE network also reaches a wide public in the education world.

SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

- Database on the eduction systems (EURYBASE).
- Various publications on education.

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June 1997

1 Under the Agreement on the European Economic Area, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein are participating in the activities of the EURYDICE network in the same way as the Member States of the European Union. Moreover, since 1996, the network activities have been open to the central and eastern European countries and to Cyprus.

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